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The
BRASSBOUNDER

The
BRASSBOUNDER

BY
DAVID W. BONE

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TO
'JAMES HAMILTON MUIR'

PREFACE TO A NEW EDITION

TO-DAY the weather, that has been fine since we left New York, has thickened. The brisk north wind that kept the sea-line clear died away to fitful airs during the night. Fog has closed in on us and we go slowly, blindly,—tapping our way by soundings of the depths,—over the undersea ridges and gullies that lead on to Cape Race. Since an hour before daybreak we have seen nothing, heard nothing, of sea-neighbours or of the world beyond the limits of our bulwarks. The horizon,—blurred indefinite circle of a ship's length,—shows little sign of expanding to the hard blue division of sea and sky that is at present chiefly our desire. North Atlantic weather! Nine months winter and three months fog!

Monotonous in its persistence, the fog has yet a certain quality of variety. With the passing of a fine quiet night, came dense cloudy vapours that hung closely to the ship, shrouding the decks and upperworks in an impenetrable pall. Roused,—

perhaps cheerful by benison of a sound night's rest,—we were optimistic. “Morning vapours,” said we, as we rang “slow” to the engine room. “The pride o’ th’ morning, no doubt! *Huh!* The sun will clear this off when he has a good look at it.” . . . Two hours, . . . three hours, . . . four, . . . the clouds of vapour that had robbed us of our sight turned to wet mist, grey and depressing. Hoar formed on the awning spars and stanchions; moisture trickled to the decks and soaked the planking underfoot: it was time to turn up coat collars and settle caps. “Scotch mist” we called it,—thinking hopefully of a drying up in process with the sun climbing over the mast-heads. Vain hope. Now—in waning afternoon—it has settled to a deep white haze and through it the treacherous sunlight dapples and shimmers on the near sea to madden us by rousing thoughts of a clear and sunny horizon far beyond. At rare intervals, a breath of wholesome north wind blows over and routs the lingering wraiths for a brief space of time. As a diver coming up for breath, we scan a modest mile of sea around. Then—the breeze dies, and the mists return.

Burr-r-r-r-aah-oop! Strident and challenging, the bold blast of our syren thunders out in the still air—the exhaust spurting a brilliant feather of white steam to join forces with the haze. A

masterful compelling ear-lash! The cut-off acts sharply on the sustained note. “. . . *aah-oop*” sounds like the final barking jeer in a vicious argument. The brazen cylinder ends its raucous clamour as though there is no more to be said. Alas, our argument with the elements is not readily concluded! At timely intervals, the steam again throws out and up in a blinding curl—*Burr-r-r-r-r-aah-oop!* Caught up by some angle of the wheelhouse, a mocking echo carries the refrain.

Eyes? One might as well have no eyes. Out-board the ship there is nothing to be seen save the swell breaking at the bows as the vessel moves slowly on her course. Only ears are of use to us and the heads of the watchkeepers trim and cant, this way and that, in our efforts to catch a whisper from beyond the curtain that enshrouds us.

The tension of expectancy relaxes in time. For hours we have listened under immediate strain and no sound has come out of the fog. Sub-consciously, our hearing sense has been trained to an acuteness that is independent of an effort of will; almost, one is become a machine—with the bell set to ring at mental contact. Our eyes—relieved from active service—have liberty to rove. Debarred from a long sea-view, they focus the more sharply on the near prospect—the spaces of the

fore-deck where ship life has the calm and normal atmosphere of a good voyage. Passengers are unconcerned at mist and slow progress. It is sufficient for them that the sea is calm. "There have been fogs at sea before," say they, stretching comfortably on the hatch covers or strolling on the gangways. The syren—by reason of its lengthy session—has no longer the power to annoy. (It is said that boilermakers at their work can converse intelligibly in whispers, that they are habitually loud-voiced in their leisure.) Habit dulls sensation. Certain it is that Old Bullroar—who would doubtless have aroused disquiet by his first thundering bellows—is now heard dispassionately; babies have ceased to struggle and whimper or indignant mothers to turn reproachful eyes towards the bridge at every resounding blast. One can become accustom——

"Stop both engines!" The aural machine has made a contact: we have heard something from the outer world—a faint indefinite trumpeting that sounds from somewhere ahead. The wash under the bows subsides to a line of bubbles as the ship loses headway and we bring up in a lazy drift. Our syren roars and an answering wail comes out of the fog. A hand horn! A fisherman at his lines! We lie stopped for a brief space to make sure of his bearing, then move

slowly, turning east a point to give him seaway. We hear him trumpeting furiously until he is well astern, but—peer as we may—see no loom of his sails through the haze. Thick enough! We had not looked for a banksman at work in the deep gully. Likely he will have his dories out, spread over a mile or more of the sea. We shall have to tune our ears to pick up any faint hail . . . *Burr-r-r-r-r-aaah-ooop* roars the syren and we resume our course and slow progress.

As the hour of changing the watch approaches, the seamen and firemen gather at the forecastle doors. It is not difficult to sort them out—these two classes of seafarers; the stamp of occupation is easily distinguished. Big strapping fellows, the firemen stand out among the rest as the men by whose muscles we measure every mile of the voyage. As eight bells is struck they start along to their four hours spell in the sweltering stokehold. Perhaps there is an assumed truculence in their bearing—to impress the passengers, interested in the changing of the watch. One might call it a finely aggressive port. They stride off, swaying from the hips, shoulders making each a circle, arms swinging in balance, the wrists turned insolently outwards. Roaring lads! Ill men to handle on sailing day when the tavern doors are on the swing!

Somewhat in contrast, the sailors—smaller men, less purposeful in aspect—take up their duties as though they had no great task to do, nor had they any special interest to maintain in the making of a good passage. One goes aloft to the crows-nest to relieve the upper lookout: he grasps the ratlins instead of the shrouds to aid his ascent—a lubberly action, judged by the age old standards of seamanship. But there are now no standards in seamanship, and the man (a keen sighted lad as we know him) is only following the practice of his day. Strangely, he is accepted by the groups of passengers on the fore-deck as the typical sea-man, the right fellow to be in a ship, the fit seafarer. A sailor going aloft! They have no eyes for the swaggering firemen: the women draw aside perceptibly as the bullies file past. “Horrid, grimy fellows,” they may say if they give them a thought—while they thrill with enthusiasm as the able seaman swings from the rigging to the foot-rail of the crows-nest. They are wrong. The fireman and his officer, the engineer, are now the dominant figures in our manning; the standards of seamanship have largely given way to the technics of the engine room. Without the skilled craftsmanship of the engineer and the trained labour at the fires all our hardily acquired seamanship would now avail

us little in making a voyage. In a stern—perhaps uncomfortable—test we might put to sea with no sailors other than a navigator and a watchkeeper or two and make a good passage. There is now little required of the deckhands that the firemen could not do.

Denied the aid of suitable distraction, it is difficult to alter currents of thought. Our course being plain sailing, with only the regular reports of the depths to be considered, one has a compelling temptation to follow the train. Standards of seamanship! A little while ago we brought up to clear a fisherman. It was a simple matter of giving an order. "Stop both engines," we said: had there been need, a signal for "full astern" would have been as readily carried out. Certainly our standards are reduced to simplicity by the astonishing application of steam power. Many of our shipmates may not notice it. To the young officer over there—standing by the engine telegraphs with alert, confident air, trimming his head from side to side, listening acutely, there will be no great matter to ponder in such easy manœuvring of the ship. His concern would be reserved for an occasion when the turning of his handles resulted in no effect. Steam-trained, there is for him no amazing circumstance of new seamanship; he sees nothing wonderful in such pre-

cision of movement. On other ships we have sailed in—square rigged sailing ships—he would have seen and taken his part in a much more stirring action than the turning of the telegraph handles. True, in this calm weather we would have been lying idle, as windless as the fisherman, and there would have been small call for a sudden handling of the ship. But in a sailing breeze there would have been orders and action enough. The helm down, sheets let rip, and the canvas thundering aloft; the men at the main braces to back the yards and shouting old sea-cries as they haul: over all the din of it; the Master peering into the mist for sight of his sea-neighbour and shouting orders the while—handling his ship by the feel of the wind on his cheek. A job o' work to bring her up: an hour's task to pay off, trim and set sail, coil down and stand on to sea again! And now! The new seamanship! . . . "Stop both engines!" Almost before the jangle of the telegraphs has died away, it is done. Far down in the bowels of the ship the engineers of the watch pull over their throttle levers to shut off steam and stop the circling of their engines with the high pressure cranks lying handily over the centres—ready to reverse in movement and back the ship. If the steam is rising in the gauges there may perhaps be a shout to the firemen to shut the

dampers. "Goad" the sweating stokers will say in authentic Glasgow, as they throw open the furnace doors and add a further volume of heat to the stokehold! "Goad! Whit th' hell 's th' Auld Man daein' wi' her nool!"

Now fourteen hours of fog! It sounds formidable, but is in fact a moderate period of thick weather on the Banks. In early morning our wireless picked up a flutter from the blue. It was a message from a vessel on the Grand Banks: they had had four days of it and were anxious to find out if there was clear weather anywhere in the North Atlantic. "Four days under the blotting paper," the Master said. We could see him there—red-eyed for want of sleep—shambling on the bridge or bending listlessly over his chart to fumble and worry the figures of his course and distance—No! After all, the sailors are not yet wholly superseded by the engine staff. We said "Stop"—and "stop" it was—but the knowledge of when to pass that order was at least as important as the carrying out of the manœuvre. Our control of the ship and machine is as yet independent; the conductor is still as necessary as the driver.

Somewhat more at peace with destiny, we recall the statement of a famous Clydeside engine builder. Speaking of his new Motor-ships, he

said he was not well disposed to having either an engineer or a spanner tool on board. His new motors had been tested in the shops under the most exacting conditions. Automatic in action, in fueling and lubrication, they had run many thousands of equivalent miles. Opened up for inspection after such trials—there was nothing to be done but to replace the gear covers and start up again. He said—in effect—that an engine driver was the man he wanted. He proposed to put up a prominent placard in the motor room—

Put the Starting Lever to the
marks on the Indicator
AND
LEAVE THINGS ALONE

Even allowing for his natural pride in a good machine (and the effects of a board-room luncheon) there was at least an indication in his statement of the trend of progress. Having condemned sails and spars and rigging to the junk heap, we are rapidly approaching a day of super-control in which no individual effort may be necessary. The marine engineer, like the sailor whom he displaced, is beginning to feel the draught: the

fireman—in the growing use of oil fuel—has already contracted a serious chill.

Drawing on towards Cape Race, we use the lead more frequently. Our last established position was on the tail of the Banquereau, the sandy undersea plateau that lies eastward of Sable Island. Two hundred and twenty miles away! A long distance; half of it at slow speed with the polar current sidling on the bow. For some time we have been sounding deep, but now the lesser line shows that we are steaming uphill—up towards the surface breakers at Cape Race. Conservative—perhaps a little intolerant of new-fangled methods—as we may be, we cannot afford to neglect any aid to navigation. We send a wireless message to the Cape, asking for our bearing. The aerial crackles with a long repetition of code numbers and presently a signal slip is in our hands—

“At twenty hours three minutes, G. M. T. (Greenwich Mean Time) your Q. T. E. was two hundred and ten.”

Two hundred and ten? That will be a bearing of South, thirty West—shipshape? We lay off the bearing on the chart, connote the depth of water, and swagger back to the bridge again. We like that three minutes! *“Huh,”* we say! *“Just about where we put her, anyway.”* In the ac-

companying squaring of our shoulders—that self-satisfied little trick of assurance—a small insidious thought comes to be pondered. Was it actually the change from the temperature of the chart-room to that of the open bridge that caused that peculiar shiver—or are we too feeling the draught?

The sea life described in this book is now only a memory to those of us “brassbounders” (British sea apprentices) who served under square sail in our early days. We are probably the last of that breed, for there are few, if any, sailing ships now voyaging in deep water. Not many of us looked for a day in which the most of our hardily-acquired seamanship would be unserviceable—a heavy volume of almost useless lore. The trade, as we learned it, was stamped by age-old tradition that seemed as permanent as the sea itself. And now—we have had to learn anew.

But not all our time was lost, not all our labour was to be rated as so much useless effort. Unconsciously, perhaps, we drew from the rigours of such a hard sea life much that has fitted us for the new seafaring. As a training school for almost any walk in life, the sailing ship had merits that were not always pronounced in longshore establishments. Perhaps our lessons did not corre-

spond with those of an accepted education, but were rather a moulding of character. While it is true that long absence from certain restraints offered opportunity for an hardening in rough, sometimes coarse habits, our training had qualities of no mean standard. We learnt self-reliance. Duty was accepted and understood, not alone to the command, but also to one's shipmates and—most of all—to the ship. Pride in our employment was there. In acquiring a sound knowledge of our ancient trade the healthy spirit of emulation was the prime factor. Honesty of purpose we held by: simplicity in outlook saved us from envy and distrust and discontent, with our lot. Hard-bitten in all conscience, restless, sometimes criminal in the reactions of a stay on shore, we formed together a curious assembly that has now no counterpart in the steamship. Of all the seven years I served in sail, I can hardly recall one shipmate whom I would not be proud and glad to meet again.

It is now ten years since *The Brassbounder* was first published. What a ten years at sea! Sail completely abandoned: marine engines developed in speed and power and reliability to sure dimensions; sixty thousand tons on one keel; ships plying with the regularity of express trains. Wireless perfected in telegraph and telephone, advancing

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rapidly in systems of control. Air-planes competing with the gulls: the Atlantic crossed on a flash of the wind. Submarines, Airships, Motor-ships! Hydrophones, Gyro-compasses, direction finders! What a list! What a ten years! And four years of the ten with war at sea. No! Not war! Piracy—black mediæval piracy—beaten, as piracy can always be, by a good sea sense. How much of that sense in seamanship, that devotion to the ship, to the trade, was inculcated in the hard unyielding school of the sailing ship? Even amongst hardened naval veterans of the war there is ever a respectful hearing for the narrator who can begin his yarn—"When I signed for the Horn in square sail——"

On reading my Preface to a New Edition, I am concerned at the atmosphere. Reminiscence, recollection, comparisons of the order of things at sea in periods that seem as ages apart! Almost it makes me feel really old. *Hutt!* I am only forty-six. I may yet be handling a fleet of liners by wireless contact from a control motor room on the Pierhead.

DAVID W. BONE.

R.M.S. *Columbia*

At Sea,

August, 1920.

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The
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1

THE 'BLUE PETER'

DING . . . dong. . . . Ding . . . dong. The university bells toll out in strength of tone that tells of south-west winds and misty weather. On the street below my window familiar city noises, unheeded by day, strike tellingly on the ear—hoof-strokes and rattle of wheels, tramp of feet on the stone flags, a snatch of song from a late reveller, then silence, broken in a little by the deep mournful note of a steamer's siren, wind-borne through the Kelvin Valley, or the shrilling of an engine whistle that marks a driver impatient at the junction points. Sleepless, I think of my coming voyage, of the long months—years, perhaps—that will come and go ere next I lie awake hearkening to the night voices of my native city. My days of holiday—an all too brief spell of comfort and shore living—are over; another peal or more of the familiar bells and my emissary of the fates—a Gorbals cabman, belike—will be at the door, ready to set me rattling over the granite setts on the direct road that leads by Bath Street, Finnieston,

and Cape Horn—to San Francisco. A long voyage and a hard. And where next? No one seems to know! Anywhere where wind blows and square-sail can carry a freight. At the office on Saturday, the shipping clerk turned his palms out at my questioning.

“Home again, perhaps. The colonies! Up the Sound or across to Japan,” he said, looking in his *Murray’s Diary* and then at the clock, to see if there was time for him to nip home for his clubs and catch the 1.15 for Kilmacolm.

Nearly seventeen months of my apprenticeship remain to be served. Seventeen months of a hard sea life, between the masts of a starvation Scotch barque, in the roughest of seafaring, on the long voyage, the stormy track leading westward round the Horn.

It will be February or March when we get down there. Not the worst months, thank Heaven! but bad enough at the best. And we’ll be badly off this voyage, for the owners have taken two able seamen off our complement. “Hard times!” they will be saying. Aye! hard times—for us, who will now have to share two men’s weight in working our heavily sparred barque.

Two new apprentices have joined. Poor little devils! they don’t know what it is. It seemed all very fine to that wee chap from Inverary who

came with his father to see the ship before he joined. How the eyes of him glinted as he looked about, proud of his brass-bound clothes and badge cap. And the Mate, all smiles, showing them over the ship and telling the old Hielan' clergyman what a fine vessel she was, and what an interest he took in boys, and what fine times they had on board ship, and all that! Ah yes—fine times! It's as well the old chap doesn't know what he is sending his son to! How can he? We know—but we don't tell. . . . Pride! Rotten pride! We come home from our first voyage sick of it all. . . . Would give up but for pride. . . . Afraid to be called 'stuck sailors' . . . of the sneers of our old schoolmates. . . . So we come home in a great show of bravery and swagger about in our brass-bound uniform and lie finely about the fine times we had . . . out there! . . . And then nothing will do but Jimmy, next door, must be off to the sea too—to come back and play the same game on young Alick! That's the way of it! . . .

Then when the Mate and the rest of them came to the halfdeck, it was: "Oh yes, Sir! This is the boys' quarters. Well! Not always like that, Sir—when we get away to sea, you know, and get things shipshape. Oh, well no! There's not much room aboard ship, you see. This is one of our boys—Mister Jones." (Jones, looking like a

millers' man—he had been stowing ship's biscuits in the tanks—grinned foolishly at the Mate's introduction: 'Mister!') "We're very busy just now, getting ready for sea. Everything's in a mess, as you see, Sir. Only joined, myself, last week. But, oh yes! It will be all right when we get to sea—when we get things shipshape and settled down, Sir!"

Oh yes! Everything will be all right then, eh? Especially when we get down off the Horn, and the dingy half-deck will be awash most of the time with icy water. The owners would do nothing to it this trip, in spite of our complaints. They sent a young man down from the office last week who poked at the covering boards with his umbrella and wanted to know what we were growling at. Wish we had him out there—off Diego Ramirez. Give him something to growl at with the ship working, and green seas on deck, and the water lashing about the floor of the house, washing out the lower bunks, bed and bedding, and soaking every stitch of the clothing that we had fondly hoped would keep us moderately dry in the next bitter night watch. And when (as we try with trembling, benumbed fingers to buckle on the sodden clothes) the ill-hinged door swings to, and a rush of water and a blast of icy wind chills us to the marrow, it needs but a hoarse, raucous shout

from without to crown the summit of misery. "Out there, the watch! Turn out!" in tone that admits of no protest. "Turn out, damn ye, an' stand-by t' wear ship!"

(A blast of wind and rain rattles on my window-pane. *Ugh!* I turn the more cosily amid my blankets.)

Oh yes! He would have something to growl at, that young man who asked if the 'Skipp-ah' was aboard, and said he "was deshed if he could see what we hed to complain of."

He would learn, painfully, that a ship, snugly moored in the south-east corner of the Queen's Dock (stern-on to a telephone call-box), and the same craft, labouring in the teeth of a Cape Horn gale, present some points of difference; that it is a far cry from 58° South to the Clyde Repair Works, and that the business of shipping is not entirely a matter of ledgers.

Oh well! Just have to stick it, though. After all, it won't always be hard times. Think of the long, sunny days drowsing along down the 'Trades,' of the fine times out there in 'Frisco, of joys of strenuous action greater than the shipping clerk will ever know, even if he should manage to hole out in three. Seventeen months! It will soon pass, and I'll be a free man when I get back

to Glasgow again. Seventeen months, and then—then——

Ding . . . dong. . . . Ding . . . dong. . . . Ding
dong. . . .

Quarter to! With a sigh for the comfort of a life ashore, I rise and dress. Through the window I see the Square, shrouded in mist, the nearer leafless shrubs swaying in the chill wind, pavement glistening in the flickering light of street lamps. A dismal morning to be setting off to the sea! Portent of head winds and foul weather that we may meet in Channel before the last of Glasgow's grime and smoke-wrack is blown from the rigging.

A stir in the next room marks another rising. Kindly old '*Ding . . . dong*' has called a favourite brother from his rest to give me convoy to the harbour.

Ready for the road, he comes to my room. Sleepy-eyed, yawning. "Four o'clock! *Ugh!* Who ever heard of a man going to sea at four in the morning! Ought to be a bright summer's day, and the sun shining and flags flying an'——" A choked laugh.

"Glad I'm not a sailorman to be going out on a morning like this! Sure you've remembered everything? Your cab should be here now. Just gone four. Heard the bells as I was dressing——"

Rattle of wheels on the granite setts—sharp,

metallic ring of shod heels—a moment of looking for a number—a ring of the door-bell.

“Perty that’s tae gang doon tae th’ Queen’s Dock wi’ luggage. . . . A’ richt, Mister! Ah can cairry them ma’sel’ Aye! Weel! Noo that ye menshun it, Sur . . . oon a mornin’ like this. . . . Ma respeks, gents!”

There are no good-byes: the last has been said the night before. There could be no enthusiasm at four on a raw November’s morning; it is best that I slip out quietly and take my seat, with a last look at the quiet street, the darkened windows, the quaint, familiar belfry of St. Jude’s.

“A’ richt, Sur. G’up, mere! Haud up, mere, ye!”

At a corner of the Square the night policeman, yawning whole-heartedly, peers into the cab to see who goes. There is nothing to investigate; the sea-chest, sailor-bag, and bedding, piled awkwardly on the ‘dickey,’ tell all he wants to know.

“A sailor for aff!”

Jingling his keys, he thinks maybe of the many ‘braw laads’ from Lochinver who go the same hard road.

Down the deserted wind-swept streets we drive steadily on, till house lights glinting behind the blinds and hurrying figures of a ‘night-shift’ show

that we are near the river and the docks. A turn along the waterside, the dim outlines of the ships and tracery of mast and spar looming large and fantastic in the darkness, and the driver, questioning, brings up at a dim-lit shed, bare of goods and cargo—the berth of a full-laden outward-bounder.

My barque—the *Florence*, of Glasgow—lies in a corner of the dock, ready for sea. Tugs are churning the muddy water alongside, getting into position to drag her from the quay wall; the lurid sidelight gleams on a small knot of well-wishers gathered at the forward gangway exchanging parting words with the local seamen of our crew. I have cut my time but short.

“Come on there, you!” is my greeting from the harassed Chief Mate. “Are you turned a—passenger, with your gloves and overcoat? You sh’d have been here an hour ago! Get a move on ye, now, and bear a hand with these warps. . . . Gad! A drunken crew an’ skulkin’ ’prentices, an’ th’ Old Man growlin’ like a bear with a sore——”

Grumbling loudly, he goes forward, leaving me the minute for ‘good-bye,’ the late ‘remembers,’ the last long hand-grip.

Into the half-deck, to change hurriedly into working clothes. Time enough to note the guttering lamp, evil smell, the dismal aspect of my home

afloat—then, on deck again, to haul, viciously despondent, at the cast-off mooring ropes.

Forward the crew—drunk to a man—are giving the Chief Mate trouble, and it is only when the gangway is hauled ashore that anything can be done. The cook, lying as he fell over his sailor bag, sings, “*'t wis ye'r vice, ma gen-tul Merry!*” in as many keys as there are points in the compass, drunkenly indifferent to the farewells of a sad-faced woman, standing on the quayside with a baby in her arms. Riot and disorder is the way of things; the Mates, out of temper with the mud-lders at the ropes, are swearing, pushing, coaxing—to some attempt at getting the ship unmoored. Double work for the sober ones, and for thanks—a muttered curse. Small wonder that men go drunk to the sea: the wonder is that any go sober!

At starting there is a delay. Some of the men have slipped ashore for a last pull at a neighbourly ‘hauf-mutchkin,’ and at a muster four are missing. For a time we hold on at single moorings, the stern tug blowing a ‘hurry-up’ blast on her siren, the Captain and a River Pilot stamping on the poop, angrily impatient. One rejoins, drunken and defiant, but of the others there is no sign. We can wait no longer.

“Let go, aft!” shouts the Captain. “Let go, an’ haul in. Damn them for worthless sodjers,

anyway! Mister"—to a waiting Board of Trade official—"send them t' Greenock, if ye can run them in. If not, telephone down that we're three A.B.'s short. . . . Lie up t' th' norr'ard, stern tug, there. Hard a-port, Mister? All right! Let go all, forr'ard!" . . . We swing into the dock passage, from whence the figures of our friends on the misty quayside are faintly visible. The little crowd raises a weakly cheer, and one bold spirit (with his guid-brither's 'hauf-pey note' in his pocket) shouts a bar or two of "Wull ye no' come back again!" A few muttered farewells, and the shore folk hurry down between the wagons to exchange a last parting word at the Kelvin-haugh. ' . . . Dong . . . ding . . . DONG . . . DONG. . . .' Set to a fanfare of steam whistles, Old Brazen Tongue of Gilmorehill tolls us benison as we steer between the pierheads. Six sonorous strokes, loud above the shrilling of workshop signals and the nearer merry jangle of the engine-house chimes.

Workmen, hurrying to their jobs, curse us for robbing them of a 'quarter,' the swing-bridge being open to let us through. "Come oan! Hurry up wi' that auld 'jeely-dish,' an' gie's a chance tae get tae wur wark," they shout in a chorus of just irritation. A facetious member of our crew shouts:

"Wot—oh, old stiy-at-'omes. Cahmin' aat t' get wandered?"—and a dockman answers:

"Hello, Jake, 'i ye therr? Man, th' sailormen maun a' be deid when th' Mate gied you a sicht! Jist you wait tae he catches ye fanklin' th' cro'-jeck sheets!"

We swing slowly between the pierheads, and the workmen, humoured by the dockman's jest, give us a hoarse cheer as they scurry across the still moving bridge. In time-honoured fashion our Cockney humorist calls for, 'Three cheers f' ol' Pier-'ead, boys,' and such of the 'boys' as are able chant a feeble echo to his shout. The tugs straighten us up in the river, and we breast the flood cautiously, for the mist has not yet cleared and the coasting skippers are taking risks to get to their berths before the stevedores have picked their men. In the shipyards, workmen are beginning their day's toil, the lowe of their flares light up the gaunt structures of ships to be. Sharp at the last wailing note of the whistle, the din of strenuous work begins, and we are fittingly drummed down the reaches to a merry tune of clanging hammers—the shipyard chorus "Let Glasgow flourish!"

Dawn finds us off Bowling, and as the fog clears gives us misty views of the Kilpatrick Hills. Ahead, Dumbarton Rock looms up, gaunt and

misty, sentinel o'er the lesser heights. South, the Renfrew shore stretches broadly out under the brightening sky—the wooded Elderslie slopes and distant hills, and, nearer, the shoal ground behind the lang Dyke where screaming gulls circle and wheel. The setting out is none so ill now, with God's good daylight broad over all, and the flags flying—the 'Blue Peter' fluttering its message at the fore.

On the poop, the Captain (the 'Old Man,' be he twenty-one or fifty) paces to and fro—a short sailor walk with a pause now and then to mark the steering or pass a word with the River Pilot. Of medium height, though broad to the point of ungainliness, Old Jock Leish (in his ill-fitting broadcloth shore-clothes) might have passed for a prosperous farmer, but it needed only a glance at the keen grey eyes peering from beneath bushy eyebrows, the determined set of a square lower jaw, to note a man of action, accustomed to command. A quick, alert turn of the head, the lift of shoulders as he walked—arms swinging in seaman-like balance—and the trick of pausing at a windward turn to glance at the weather sky, marked the sailing shipmaster—the man to whom thought and action must be as one.

Pausing at the binnacle to note the direction of the wind, he gives an exclamation of disgust.

"A 'dead muzzler,' Pilot. No sign o' a slant in the trend o' th' upper clouds. Sou'west, outside, I'm afraid. . . . Mebbe it's just as weel; we'll have t' bring up at th' Tail o' th' Bank, anyway, for these three hands, damn them. . . . An' th' rest are useless. . . . Drunk t' a man, th' Mate says. God! They'd better sober up soon, or we'll have to try Yankee music t' get things shipshape!"

The Pilot laughed. "I thought the Yankee touch was done with at sea now," he said. "Merchant Shippin' Act, and that sort of thing, Captain?"

"Goad, no! It's no bye wi' yet, an' never will be as long as work has to be done at sea. I never was much taken with it myself, but, damn it, ye've got to sail the ship, and ye can't do it without hands. Oh, a little of it at the setting off does no harm—they forget all about it before long; but at the end of a voyage, when ye're getting near port, it's not very wise. No, not very wise—an' besides, you don't need it!"

The Pilot grins again, thinking maybe of his own experiences, before he 'swallowed part of the anchor,' and Old Jock returns to his walk.

Overhead the masts and spars are black with the grime of a voyage in Glasgow Harbour, and Irish pennants fluttering wildly on spar

and rigging tell of the scamped work of those whose names are not on our Articles. Sternly superintended (now that the Mate has given up all hope of getting work out of the men), we elder boys are held aloft, reeving running gear through the leads in the maintop. On the deck below the new apprentices gaze in open-mouthed admiration at our deeds; they wonder why the Mate should think such clever fellows laggard, why he should curse us for clumsy sodgers, as a long length of rope goes (wrongly led) through the top. In a few months more they themselves will be criticising the hoodlums, and discussing the wisdom of the 'Old Man' in standing so far to the south'ard.

Fog comes dense on us at Port Glasgow, and incoming steamers, looming large on the narrowed horizon, steer sharply to the south to give us water. Enveloped in the driving wraiths we hear the deep notes of moving vessels, the clatter of bells on ships at anchor, and farther down, loud over all, the siren at the Cloch, bellowing a warning of thick weather beyond the Point. Sheering cautiously out of the fairway, we come to anchor at Tail of the Bank to wait for our 'pier-head jumps.'

At four in the afternoon, a launch comes off with our recruits and our whipper-in explains his apparent delay.

"Hilt nor hair o' th' men that left ye hae I seen. I thocht I'd fin' them at 'Dirty Dick's' when th' pubs opened . . . but no, no' a sign: an' a wheen tailor buddies wha cashed their advance notes huntin' high an' low! I seen yin o' them ower by M'Lean Street wi' a nicht polis wi' 'm t' see he didna get a heid pit on 'm!—'sss! A pant! So I cam' doon here, an' I hiv been lookin' for sailormen sin' ten o'clock. Man, they'll no' gang in thae wind-jammers, wi' sae mony new steamers speirin' hauns, an' new boats giein' twa ten fur th' run tae London. . . . Thir's th' only yins I can get, an' ye wadna get them, but that twa's feart o' th' polis an' Jorgensen wants t' see th' month's advance o' th' lang yin!"

The Captain eyes the men and demands of one:

"Been to sea before?"

"*Nach robh mhi?* Twa years I wass a 'bow rope' in the *I-on-a*, an' I wass a wheelhouse in the Allan Line."

A glance at his discharges confirms his claim, slight as it is, to seamanship, and Duncan M'Innes, of Sleat, in Skye, after being cautioned as to his obligations, signs his name and goes forward.

Patrick Laughlin has considerable difficulty in explaining his absence from the sea for two years, but the Captain, after listening to a long, rambling statement . . . "i' th' yairds . . . riggin' planks

fur th' rivitter boys. . . . Guid-brither a gaffer in Hamilton's, at the Poort . . . shoart time" . . . gives a quick glance at the alleged seaman's cropped head and winks solemnly at the Shipping-master, who is signing the men on. Hands being so scarce, however, Patrick is allowed to touch the pen.

One glance at the third suffices. Blue eyes and light colourless hair, high cheek-bones and lithe limbs, mark the Scandinavian. Strong, wiry fingers and an indescribable something proclaim the sailor, and though Yon Shmit can hardly say 'yes' in English, he looks the most likely man of the three.

The Shipping-master, having concluded his business, steps aboard his launch, leaving us with a full crew, to wait the weather clearing, and the fair wind that would lift us down Channel.

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Daybreak next morning shows promise of better weather, and a light S.S.E. wind with a comparatively clear sky decides the Old Man to take the North Channel for it. As soon as there is light enough to mark their colours, a string of flags brings off our tug-boat from Princes Pier, and we start to heave up the anchor. A stout coloured man sets up a chantey in a very creditable bari-

tone, and the crew, sobered now by the snell morning air, give sheet to the chorus.

*'Blow, boy-s, blow,—for Califor-ny, oh!
For there's lot's of gold, so I've been told,
On the banks—of Sa-cramen-to!'*

The towing-hawser is passed aboard, and the tug takes the weight off the cable. The nigger having reeled off all he knows of 'Californy,' a Dutchman sings lustily of 'Sally Brown.' Soon the Mate reports, "Anchor's short, Sir," and gets the order to weigh. A few more powerful heaves with the seaman-like poise between each—"Spent my mo-ney on Sa-lley Brown!"—and the shout comes, "Anchor's a-weigh!"

Down comes the Blue Peter from the fore, whipping at shroud and backstay in quick descent—our barque rides ground-free, the voyage begun!

The light is broad over all now, and the Highland hills loom dark and misty to the norr'ard. With a catch at the heart, we pass the well-known places, slowly making way, as if the flood-tide were striving still to hold us in our native waters. A Customs boat hails, and asks of us, "Whither bound?" "'Frisco away!" we shout, and they wave us a brief God-speed. Rounding the Cloch, we meet the coasting steamers scurrying up the Firth.

"'Ow'd ye like t' be a stiy-at-'ome, splashin' abaht in ten fathoms, like them blokes, eh?" the

Cockney asks me, with a deep-water man's contempt in his tone.

How indeed? Yearning eyes follow their glistening stern-wash as they speed past, hot-foot for the river berths.

Tide has made now. A short period of slack water, and the ebb bears us seaward, past the Cowal shore, glinting in the wintry sunlight, the blue smoke in Dunoon valley curling upward to Kilbride Hill, past Skelmorlie Buoy (tolling a doleful benediction), past Rothesay Bay, with the misty Kyles beyond. The Garroch Head, with a cluster of Clyde Trust Hoppers, glides abaft the beam, and the blue Cock o' Arran shows up across the opening water. All is haste and bustle. Aloft, spider-like figures, black against the tracery of the rigging, cast down sheets and clew lines in the one place where they must go. Shouts and hails—"Fore cross-trees, there! Royal buntline inside th' crin'line, *in-side*, damn ye!"

"Aye, aye! Stan' fr' under!"

. . . *rrup!* A coil of rope hurtling from a height comes rattling to the rail, to be secured to its own particular belaying-pin. Out of a seeming chaos comes order. Every rope has its name and its place and its purpose; and though we have 'sodgers' among us, before Arran is astern we are ready to take to the wind. Off Pladda we set

staysails and steer to the westward, and, when the wind allows, hoist topsails and crowd the canvas on her. The short November day has run its course when we cast off the tow-rope. As we pass the standing tug, all her hands are hauling the hawser aboard. Soon she comes tearing in our wake to take our last letters ashore and to receive the Captain's 'blessing.' A heaving-line is thrown aboard, and into a small oilskin bag are put our hastily written messages and the Captain's material 'blessing.' Shades of Romance! Our last link with civilisation severed by a bottle of Hennessy's Three Star!

The tugmen (after satisfying themselves as to the contents of the bag) give us a cheer and a few parting 'skreichs' on their siren and, turning quickly, make off to a Norwegian barque, lying-to, off Ailsa Craig.

All hands, under the Mates, are hard driven, sweating on sheet and halyard to make the most of the light breeze. At the wheel I have little to do; she is steering easily, asking no more than a spoke or two, when the Atlantic swell, running under, lifts her to the wind. Ahead of us a few trawlers are standing out to the Skerryvore Banks. Broad to the North, the rugged, mist-capped Mull of Cantyre looms up across the heaving water. The

breeze is steady, but a falling barometer tells of wind or mist ere morning.

Darkness falls, and coast lights show up in all airts. Forward, all hands are putting a last drag on the topsail halyards, and the voice of the nigger tells of the fortunes of—

'Renzo—boys, Renzo!'

II

STEERSMANSHIP

WEE LAUGHLIN, dismissed from the wheel for bad steering, was sitting on the fore-hatch, a figure of truculence and discontent, mouthing a statement on the Rights of Man, accompanied by every oath ever heard on Clyde-side from Caird's to Tommy Seath's at Ru'glen. It was not the loss of his turn that he regretted—he was better here, where he could squirt tobacco juice at will, than on the poop under the Mate's eye—but, hardened at the 'Poort' as he was, he could not but feel the curious glances of his watch-mates, lounging about in dog-watch freedom and making no secret of their contempt of an able seaman who couldn't steer, to begin with.

"'Ow wos she 'eadin', young feller, w'en ye—left!" Cockney Hicks, glancing away from the culprit, was looking at the trembling leaches of top'gal'nsails, sign of head winds.

"'Er heid! Ach, aboot Nor' thurty west!"

"Nor' thirty west? Blimy! Where th' 'ell's that? 'Ere! Give us it in points! None o' yer bloomin' degrees aboard square-sail, young feller!"

"Weel, that's a' th' wye I ken it!" Sullen, mouth twisted askew in the correct mode of the 'Poort,' defiant.

"It wis aye degrees in a' th' boats I hiv been in—none o' thae wee black chats ye ca' p'int's; we niver heeded thim. Degrees, an' 'poort' an' 'starboord'—t' hell wit' yer 'luffs' an' 'nae highers'!"

"Blimy!"

"Aye, blimy! An' I cud steer them as nate's ye like; but I'm no guid enough fur that swine o' a Mate, aft there!" He spat viciously. "'Nae higher,' æz he c' me. 'Nae higher, Sur,' says I, pitten' the wheel a bit doon. 'Up,' says he, 'up, blast ye! Ye're lettin' r come up i' th' win', says he. I pit th'—wheel up, keeping' ma 'ee on th' compass caird; but that wis a fau't tae. . . 'Damn ye!' says he; 'keep yer 'ee on th' to'gallan' leaches.' . . . 'Whaur's that?' sez I. 'Oh, holy smoke!' sez he. 'Whit hiv we got here?' An' he cam' ower and hut me a kick, an' shouts fur anither haun' t' th' wheel! . . . By——" mumbling a vicious formula, eyes darkening angrily as he looked aft at the misty figure on the poop.

Cockney looked at him curiously.

"Wot boats 'ave ye bin in, anyway?" he said. "Them boats wot ye never steered by th' win' before?"

“—fine boats! A han’ sicht better nor this bluidy ould wreck. Boats wi’ a guid gaun screw at th’ stern av thim! Steamers, av coorse! This is th’ furst bluidy win’-jammer I hae been in, an’ by — it’ll be th’ last! An’ that Mate! Him! . . . Oh! If I only hid ’m in Rue-en’ Street . . . wi’ ma crood aboot,”—kicking savagely at a coil of rope—“he widna be sae smert wi’ ’is fit! Goad, no!”

“Ye’ fust win’-jammer, eh?” said Cockney pleasantly. “Oh well—ye’ll l’arn a lot! Blimy, ye’ll l’arn a lot before ye sees Rue-hend Street again. An’ look ’ere!”—as if it were a small matter—“if ye cawn’t steer th’ bloomin’ ship afore we clears th’ bloomin’ Channel, ye kin count *hon* me fer a bloomin’ good ’idin’! I ain’t agoin’ t’ take no other bloomin’ bloke’s w’eel! Not much, I ain’t!”

“Nor me!” “Nor me!” said the others, and Wee Laughlin, looking round at the ring of threatening faces, realised that he was up against a greater power than the Officer tramping the poop beyond.

“Wull ye no’?” he said, spitting with a great show of bravery. “Wull ye no’? Mebbe I’ll hae sumthin’ t’ say aboot th’ hidin’. . . . An’ ye’ll hae twa av us tae hide whin ye’re a’ it. I’m nut th’ only yin. There’s the Hielan’man . . . him wi’ th’ fush scales on’s oilskins. He nivvir wis in a win’-jammer afore, he telt me; an’——”

“An’ what eef I nefer wass in a win’-hammer pefore!” M’Innes, quick to anger, added another lowering face to the group. “Wait you till I am sent awaay from th’ wheel . . . an’ thaat iss not yet, no! . . . Hielan’man? . . . Hielan’man? . . . Tamm you, I wass steerin’ by th’ win’ pefore you wass porn, aye! . . . An’ aal t’ time you wass in chail, yess!”

In the face of further enmity, Wee Laughlin said no more, preferring to gaze darkly at the unknowing Mate, while his lips made strange formations—excess of thought! The others, with a few further threats—a word or two about ‘hoodlums’ and ‘them wot signed for a man’s wage, an’ couldn’t do a man’s work’—returned to their short dog-watch paces, two and two, talking together of former voyages and the way of things on their last ships.

We were in the North Channel, one day out, with the Mull of Cantyre just lost to view. The light wind that had carried us out to the Firth had worked to the westward, to rain and misty weather, and all day we had been working ship in sight of the Irish coast, making little headway against the wind. It was dreary work, this laggard setting out—hanging about the land, tack and tack, instead of trimming yards to a run down Channel. Out on the open sea we could perforce be philo-

sophic, and talk of 'the more days, the more dollars'; but here in crowded waters, with the high crown of Innistrathull mocking at our efforts, it was difficult not to think of the goodness of a shore life. As the close of each watch came round the same spirit of discontent prompted the question of the relief, officer or man. On the poop it was. "Well, Mister! How's her head now? Any sign of a slant?" On the foredeck, "'Ere! Wot th' 'ell 'ave ye bin doin' with 'er? Got th' bloomin' anchor down or wot?"

At nightfall the rain came down heavily before fitful bursts of chill wind. Ours was the first watch, and tramping the deck in stiff, new oilskins, we grumbled loudly at the ill-luck that kept us marking time.

"I wonder w'y th' Old Man don't put abaht an' run dahn th' Gawges Channel. Wot's 'e 'angin' abaht 'ere for, hanyw'y? Wot does 'e expeck?" said Cockney, himself a 'navigator'—by his way of it.

"Oh, shift o' wind, or something," said I. "I was aft at th' binnacles an' heard him talkin' t' th' Mate about it. Says th' wind'll back t' th' south'-ard if th' barometer don't rise. Told the Mate to call him if the glass went up before twelve. I see old 'Steady-all'" (we are one day out, but all properly named) "popping up and down the cabin

stairs. He'll be building a reef of burnt matches round the barometers before that fair wind comes."

"Sout' vass fair vind, ass ve goes now, aind't id?" asked Dutch John, a pleasant-faced North German.

"Fair wind? 'Oo th' 'ell's talkin' 'bout fair win's, an' that Shmit at th' w'eel? 'Ow d'ye ex-peck a fair win' with a Finn—a bloody Rooshian Finn's a-steerin' ov 'er?" Martin, a tough old sea-dog, with years of service, claimed a hearing.

"No, an' we won't 'ave no fair win' till a lucky man steers 'er! Ain't much that way myself—me bein' a Liverpool man—but there's Collins there—the nigger. . . . Niggers is lucky, an' West-country-men, an' South of Ireland men—if they ain't got black 'air—but Finns! Finns is the wu'st o' bloody bad luck! . . . Knowed a Finn onst wot raised an 'owlin' gale again us, just a-cos th' Ol' Man called 'im a cross-eyed son ef a gun fur breakin' th' p'int ov a marlinspike! Raised an 'owlin' gale, 'e did! No, no! Ye won't 'ave no fair win' till a lucky man goes aft. 'Ere, Collins! Your nex' w'eel, ain't it?"

Collins grinned an affirmative.

"Right-o! Well, young fellers, ye kin spit on yer 'an's fur squarin' them yards somewheres between four an' eight bells. Nuthin' like a nigger for bringin' fair win's. . . . An' 'e's a speshul kind

o' nigger, too. . . . Nova Scotiaman, Pictou way . . . talks the same lingo as th' 'ilandman . . . 'im on th' look-out, there."

"Not the Gaelic, surely?" said I.

"Aye, Gaelic. That's it. They speak that lingo out there, black an' w'ite. Knowed lots o' niggers wot spoke it . . . an' chows too!"

I turned to Collins—a broad, black nigger with thick lips, woolly hair, white, gleaming teeth—the type! He grinned.

"Oh yass," he said. "Dat's ri'! Dey speak de Gaelic dere—dem bluenose Scotchmen, an' Ah larn it when Ah wass small boy. Ah doan' know much now . . . forgot it mos' . . . but Ah know 'nuff t' ask dat boy Munro how he wass. *Hoo! Ho!! Hoo!!!* 'Cia mar tha thu nis,' Ah says, an' he got so fright', he doan' be seasick no mo'!"

A wondrous cure!

At ten Collins relieved the wheel and we looked for the shift that old Martin had promised but there was no sign of it—no lift to the misty horizon, no lessening in the strength of the squalls, now heavy with a smashing of bitter sleet. Bunched up against the helm, a mass of oilskins glistening in the compass light, our 'lucky man' scarce seemed to be doing anything but cower from the weather. Only the great eyes of him, peering aloft from under the peak of his sou'wester, showed

that the man was awake; and the ready turns of the helm, that brought a steering tremor to the weather leaches, marked him a cunning steersman, whichever way his luck lay.

Six bells struck, the Mate stepped below to the barometers, and a gruff "Up! up!" (his way of a whisper) accompanied the tapping of the aneroid. There he found encouragement and soon had the Old Man on deck, peering with him in the wind's eye at the brightening glare of Innistrahull Light out in the west.

"Clearing, eh? And the glass risin'," said the Old Man. "Looks like nor'-west! Round she goes, Mister: we'll lose no more time. Stan' by t' wear ship!"

"Aye, aye, Sir! Stan' by t' square mainyards, the watch, there!"

Shouting as he left the poop, the Mate mustered his men at the braces.

"Square mainyards! That's th' talk," said old Martin, throwing the coils down with a swing. "Didn't Ah tell ye it wos a nigger as'd bring a fair win'!"

"But it ain't fair yet," said I. "Wind's west as ever it was; only th' Old Man's made up his mind t' run her down th' George's Channel. Might ha' done that four hours ago!"

"Wot's th' use o' talkin' like that? 'Ow th' 'ell

could 'e make up 'is min' wi' a Rooshian Finn at the' w'eel, eh? Don't tell me! Ah knows as niggers is lucky an' Finns ain't; an' don't ye give me none o' yer bloody sass, young feller, cos . . . " ("Haul away mainyards, there!") . . . "*Ho!* . . . *io* . . . *io* . . . *Ho!* round 'em in, me sons. . . . *Ho!* . . . *io* . . . *io* . . . Twenty days t'th' Line, boys! . . . *Ho* . . . *io* . . . *ho!*"

A hard case, Martin!

Turning on heel, we left Innistrahull to fade away on the quarter, and, under the freshening breeze, made gallant steering for the nigger. This was more like the proper way to go to sea, and when eight bells clanged we called the other watch with a rousing shout.

"Out, ye bloomin' Jonahs! Turn out, and see what the port watch can do for ye. A fair wind down Channel, boys! Come on! Turn out, ye hungry Jonahs, and coil down for your betters!"

After two days of keen sailing, running through the Channel traffic, we reached the edge of soundings. The nor'-west breeze still held, though blowing light, and under a spread of canvas we were leaning away to the south'ard on a course for the Line Crossing. We sighted a large steamer coming in from the west, and the Old Man, glad of a chance to be reported, hauled up to 'speak' her. In

hoists of gaily coloured bunting we told our name and destination, and a wisp of red and white at the liner's mast acknowledged our message. As she sped past she flew a cheering signal to wish us a 'pleasant voyage,' and then lowered her ensign to ours as a parting salute.

"Keep her off to her course again—sou'-west, half south!" ordered the Old Man when the last signal had been made.

"Aff tae her coorse ag'in, Sur! Sou'-west, hauf south, Sur!"

At sound of the steersman's answer I turned from my job at the signal locker. Wee Laughlin, eyes on the weather clew of the royals, was learning!

III

THE WAY OF THE HALF-DECK

THE guttering lamp gave little light in the half-deck; its trimming had been neglected on this day of storm, so we sat in semi-gloom listening to the thunder of seas outside. On the grimy deal table lay the remains of our supper—crumbs of broken sea-biscuits, a scrap of greasy salt horse, dirty plates and pannikins, a fork stabbed into the deal to hold the lot from rolling, and an overturned hook-pot that rattled from side to side at each lurch of the ship, the dregs of the tea it had held dripping to the weltering floor. For once in a way we were miserably silent. We sat dourly together, as cheerless a quartette as ever passed watch below. “Who wouldn’t sell his farm, and go to sea?” asked Hansen, throwing off his damp jacket and boots and turning into his bunk. “‘A life on th’ ocean wave,’ eh? Egad! Here’s one who wishes he had learned to drive a wagon!”

“And another,” said Eccles. “That—or selling matches on th’ highway! . . . Come on, Kid! Get a move on ye and clear away! . . . And mind ye jamm the gear off in the locker. No more o’

these tricks like ye did in Channel—emptyin' half the bloomin' whack into th' scupper! You jamm the gear off proper, or I'll lick ye!"

Young Munro, the 'peggy' of our watch, swallowed hard and set about his bidding. His small features were pinched and drawn, and a ghastly pallor showed that a second attack of sea-sickness was not far off. He staggered over to the table and made a half-hearted attempt to put the gear away.

"What's th' matter with ye?" said Eccles roughly. "Ye've been long enough away from ye'r mammy t' be able t' keep ye'r feet. A fortnight at sea, an' still comin' th' 'Gentle Annie'! You look sharp now, an' don't——"

"Eccles!"

"Eh?"

"You let the Kid alone," said Hansen in a dreamy, half-sleepy tone. "You let the Kid alone, or I'll twist your damn neck! Time enough for you to start chinnin' when your elders are out o' sight. You shut up!"

"Oh, all right! Ye needn't get ratty. If you want t' pamper the bloomin' Kid, it's none of my business, I s'pose. . . . All the same, you took jolly good care I did *my* 'peggy' last voyage! There was no pamperin' that I remember!"

"Different!" said Hansen, still in the same

sleepy tone. "Different! You were always big enough an' ugly enough t' stand the racket. You leave the Kid alone!"

Eccles turned away to his bunk and, seeking his pipe, struck match after match in a vain attempt to light the damp tobacco. Now and then the ship would falter in her swing—an ominous moment of silence and steadiness—before the shock of a big sea sent her reeling again. The crazy old half-deck rocked and groaned at the battery as the sea ran aft, and a spurt of green water came from under the covering board. Some of the sea-chests worked out of the lashings and rattled down to leeward. Eccles and I triced them up, then stowed the supper gear in the locker.

"A few more big 'uns like that," said I, "and this rotten old house 'll go a-voyagin'! . . . Wonder it has stood so long."

"Do ye think there's danger!" asked the Kid, in a falter, and turning terrified eyes on one after another.

"Course," said Hansen—we had thought him asleep—"course there is! That's what ye came here for, isn't it? This is when th' hero stands on th' weather taffrail, graspin' th' tautened backst'y an' hurlin' defiance at th' mighty elements—'Nick Carter,' chap. one!"

Eccles and I grinned. Munro took heart.

"Danger," still the drowsy tone, "I should think there is! Why, any one o' these seas might sweep the harness-cask and t'morrow's dinner overboard! Any one of 'em might——"

The door swung to with a crash, a blast of chill wind and rain blew in on us, the lamp flickered and flared, a dripping oilskin-clad figure clambered over the washboard.

"Door! door!" We yelled as he fumbled awkwardly with the handle.

"Oh, shut up! Ye'd think it was the swing-door of a pub. t' hear ye shouting!" He pulled heavily, and the broken-hinged baulk slammed into place. It was Jones, of the other watch, come in to turn us out.

"Well, I'm hanged!" He looked around the house—at the litter on the floor, at the spurting water that lashed across with the lurch of her. "Why don't some of ye bale the place out 'stead of standing by t' shout 'Door, door!' when there's no need? Damn! Look at that!" She lurched again. A foot or more of broken water dashed from side to side, carrying odds of loose gear with it. "Egad! The port watch for lazy sojers—every time! Why don't ye turn to an' dry the half-deck out? Oh no; not your way! It's 'Damn you, Jack—I'm all right!' with you chaps. Goin' on deck again soon, eh? Why should ye

dry up for the other watch, eh? . . . Oh! all right. Just you——”

“Oh, dry up yourself, Jones!” Hansen sat up in his bunk and turned his legs out. “What you making all the noise about? We’ve been balin’ and balin’, and it’s no use! No use at all . . . with that covering board working loose and the planks opening out at every roll. . . . What’s up, anyway? . . . All hands, eh?”

“Yes. ‘All hands wear ship’ at eight bells! We’ve just set the fore lower tops’l. Think we must be getting near the Western Islands by the way th’ Old Man’s poppin’ up and down. It’s pipin’ outside! Blowin’ harder than ever, and that last big sea stove in the weather side of the galley. The watch are at it now, planking up and that. . . . Well, I’m off! Ye’ve quarter an hour t’ get your gear on. Lively, now! . . . ” At the door he turned, eyeing the floor, now awash. “Look ere, young ’un”—to poor, woebegone Munro—“the Mate says you’re not to come on deck. You stay here and bale up, an’ if the damn place isn’t dry when we come below I’ll hide the life out o’ ye! . . . Oh, it’s no use screwin’ your face up. ‘Cry baby’ business is no good aboard a packet! You buck up an’ bale the house . . . or . . . look out!” He heaved at the door, sprawled over, and floundered out into the black night.

Munro turned a white, despairing face on us elders. We had no support for him. Hansen was fumbling with his belt. I was drawing on my long boots. Both of us seemed not to have heard. This was the way of the half-deck. With Eccles it had been different. He was only a second voyager, a dog-watch at sea—almost a ‘greenhorn.’ There was time enough for him to ‘chew the rag’ when he had got the length of keeping a regular ‘wheel and look out.’ Besides, it was a ‘breach’ for him to start bossing about when there were two of his elders in the house. We could fix him all right!

Ah! But Jones! . . . It was not that we were afraid of him. Either of us would have plugged him one at the word ‘Go!’ if it had been a straight affair between us. But this was no business of ours. Jones was almost a man. In about a year his time would be out. There could be no interference, not a word could be said; it was—the way of the half-deck.

Swaying, sailor-like, on the reeling deck, we drew on our oilskins and sea-boots, buckled our belts, tied down the flaps of our sou’westers, and made ready. While we were at it Munro started on his task. He filled the big bucket, dragged it halfway to the door, then sat down heavily with a low cry of dismay.

"What's the matter, Kid, eh?" said Hansen kindly. "Got the blues, eh? Buck up, man! Blue's a rotten colour aboard ship! Here, hand me the bucket!"

He gripped the handle, stood listening for a chance, then swung the door out an inch or two, and tipped the bucket.

"It . . . it's . . . not . . . that," said the youngster. "It's . . . s-s-staying in here w-when you fellows are on d-deck! . . . Ye . . . s-said th' house m-might go . . . any time! . . . Let me come! . . ."

"No, no! Th' Mate said you weren't t' come on deck! You stay here! You'd only be in th' way! You'll be all right here; the rotten old box 'll stand a few gales yet! . . . What's that?"

Above the shrilling of the gale we heard the Mate's bull roar: "All . . . hands . . . wear . . . ship!"

We took our chance, swung the door to, and dashed out. Dismayed for a moment—the sudden change from light to utter darkness—we brought up, grasping the life-lines in the waist, and swaying to meet the wild lurches of the ship. As our eyes sobered to the murk we saw the lift of the huge seas that thundered down the wind. No glint of moon or star broke through the mass of driving cloud that blackened the sky to windward;

only when the gleam of a breaking crest spread out could we mark the depth to which we drove, or the height when we topped a wall of foaming water. The old barque was labouring heavily, reeling to it, the decks awash to our knees. Only the lower tops'ls and a stays'l were set; small canvas, but spread enough to keep her head at the right angle as wave after wave swept under or all but over her. "Stations!" we heard the Mate calling from his post at the lee fore braces. "Lay along here! Port watch, forrard!"

We floundered through the swirl of water that brimmed the decks and took our places. Aft, we could see the other watch standing by at the main. Good! It would be a quick job, soon over! The Old Man was at the weather gangway, conning the ship and waiting for a chance. Below him, all hands stood at his orders—twenty-three lives were in his keeping at the moment; but there was no thought of that—we knew our Old Jock, we boasted of his sea cunning. At length the chance came; a patch of lesser violence after a big sea had been met and surmounted. The sure, steady eye marked the next heavy roller. There was time and distance! . . . "Helm up, there!" (Old Jock for a voice!)

Now her head paid off, and the order was given, 'Square mainyards!' Someone wailed a

hauling cry and the great yards swung round, tops'l lifting to the quartering wind. As the wind drew aft she gathered weight and scudded before the gale. Seas raced up and crashed their bulk at us when, at the word, we strained together to drag the foreyards from the backstays. Now she rolled the rails under—green, solid seas to each staggering lift. At times it seemed as if we were all swept overboard. There was no hold to the feet! We stamped and floundered to find a solid place to brace our feet and knees against; trailed out on the ropes—all afloat—when she scooped the ocean up, yet stood and hauled when the chance was ours. A back roll would come. “Hold all! . . . Stand to it, sons! . . . ” With a jerk that seemed to tear at the limbs of us, the heavy yards would weigh against us. There was no pulling . . . only “stand and hold” . . . “hold hard.” Then, to us again: “Hay . . . o . . . Ho . . . Hay . . . o! . . . Round 'em in, boys! . . . ” Quick work, hand over hand, the blocks rattling cheerily as we ran in the slack.

“Vast haulin' foreyards! Turn all and lay aft!” We belayed the ropes, and struggled aft to where the weaker watch were hauling manfully. The sea was now on the other quarter, and lashing over the top rail with great fury. Twice the Second Mate, who was 'tending the weather braces,

was washed down among us, still holding by the ropes. "Haul awaay, lauds!" he would roar as he struggled back to his perilous post. "Haul, you!"

We dragged the yards to a new tack; then to the fore, where again we stood the buffet till we had the ship in trim for heaving-to.

"All hands off the deck!" roared the Mate when the headyards were steadied. "Lay aft, all hands!"

Drenched and arm weary as we were, there was no tardiness in our scramble for safe quarters—some to the poop, some to the main rigging. We knew what would come when she rounded-to in a sea like that.

"All ready, Sir," said the Mate when he came aft to report. "All hands are off the deck!"

"Aye, aye!" Old Jock was peering out to windward, watching keenly for a chance to put his helm down. There was a perceptible lull in the wind, but the sea was high as ever. The heavy, racing clouds had broken in the zenith; there were rifts here and there through which shone fleeting gleams from the moon, lighting the furious ocean for a moment, then vanishing as the storm-wrack swept over.

It seemed a long time before the Old Man saw the 'smooth' he was waiting for. A succession of

big seas raced up, broke, and poured aboard: one, higher than all, swept by, sending her reeling to the trough. Now—the chance! “Ease th’ helm down!” he shouted. “Stand by, all!” Her head swung steadily to windward, the steering way was well timed.

Suddenly, as we on the poop watched ahead, a gleam of light shone on the wet decks. The half-deck door was swung out—a figure blocked the light, sprawling over the washboard—Munro! “Back!” we yelled. “Go back!”

There was time enough, but the youngster, confused by the shouts, ran forward, then aft, bewildered.

The ship was bearing up to the wind and sea. Already her head was driving down before the coming of the wave that was to check her way. In a moment it would be over us. The Mate leapt to the ladder, but, as he balanced, we saw one of the men in the main rigging slide down a backstay, drop heavily on deck, recover, and dash on towards the boy.

Broad on the beam of her, the sea tore at us and brimmed the decks—a white-lashing fury of a sea, that swept fore and aft, then frothed in a whelming torrent to leeward.

When we got forward through the wash of it, we found Jones crouching under the weather rail.

One arm was jammed round the bulwark stanchion, the wrist stiffened and torn by the wrench, the other held the Kid—a limp, unconscious figure.

“Carry him aft,” said Jones. “I think . . . he’s . . . all right . . . only half drowned!” He swayed as he spoke, holding his hand to his head, gasping, and spitting out. “D-damn young swine! What . . . he . . . w-want t’ come on deck f-for? T-told . . . him t’ . . . s-stay below!”

IV

THE 'DEAD HORSE'

FINE weather, if hot as the breath of Hades, and the last dying airs of the nor'-east trades drifting us to the south'ard at a leisured three knots.

From the first streak of daylight we had been hard at work finishing up the general overhaul of gear and rigging that can only be done in the steady trade winds. Now it was over; we could step out aloft, sure of our foothold; all the treacherous ropes were safe in keeping of the 'shakin's cask,' and every block and runner was working smoothly, in readiness for the shifting winds of the doldrums that would soon be with us.

The work done, bucket and spar were manned and, for the fourth time that day, the sun-scorched planks and gaping seams of the deck were sluiced down—a job at which we lingered, splashing the limpid water as fast as the wetted planks steamed and dried again. A grateful coolness came with the westing of the tyrant sun, and when our miserable evening meal had been hurried through we sought the deck again, to sit under the cool draught of

the foresail watching the brazen glow that attended the sun's setting, the glassy patches of windless sea, the faint ripples that now and then swept over the calm—the dying breath of a stout breeze that had lifted us from 27° North. What talk there was among us concerned our voyage, a never-failing topic; and old Martin, to set the speakers right, had brought his 'log'—a slender yardstick—from the forecandle.

“ . . . ty-seven . . . ty-eight . . . twenty-nine,” he said, counting a row of notches. “Thirty days hout t'morrer, an' th' 'dead 'orse' is hup t' day, sons!”

“ ‘Dead 'oss' hup t' dye? 'Ow d'ye mike that aht?’ ” said ‘Cockney’ Hicks, a man of importance, now promoted to bo'sun. “Fust Sunday we wos in Channel, runnin' dahn th' Irish lights, worn't it?”

“Aye!”

“Secon' Sunday we wos routin' abaht in them strong southerly win's, hoff th' Weste'n Isles?”

“That's so,” said Martin, patting his yardstick. “Right-o!”

“Third Sunday we 'ad th' trides, runnin' south; lawst Sunday wos fourth Sunday hout, an' this 'ere's Friday—‘peasoup-dye,’ ain't it? 'Ow d'ye mike a month o' that? ‘Dead 'oss' ain't up till t'morrer, I reckon!”

"Well, ye reckons wrong, bo'sun! Ye ain't a-countin' of th' day wot we lay at anchor at th' Tail o' th' Bank!"

"Blimy, no! I'd forgotten that dye!"

"No! An' I tell ye th' 'dead 'orse' is hup, right enuff. I don't make no mistake in *my* log. . . . Look at 'ere," pointing to a cross-cut at the head of his stick. "That's the dye wot we lay at anchor—w'en you an' me an' the rest ov us wos proper drunk. 'Ere we starts away," turning to another side; "them up strokes is 'ead win's, an' them downs is fair; 'ere's where we got that blow hoff th' Weste'n Isles," putting his finger-nail into a deep cleft; "that time we carries away the topmas' stays'l sheet; an' 'ere's th' trade win's wot we're 'avin' now! . . . All k'rect, I tell ye. Ain't no mistakes 'ere, sons!" He put the stick aside the better to fill his pipe.

"Vot yo' calls dem holes in de top, Martin, *zoone*? Dot vass sometings, aind't id?"

Vootgert, the Belgian, picked the stick up, turning it over carelessly.

Martin snatched it away.

"A course it's 'sometings,' ye Flemish 'og! If ye wants to know pertiklar, them 'oles is two p'un' o' tebaccer wot I had sence I come aboard. Don't allow no Ol' Man t' do *me* in the bloomin' hye w'en it comes t' tottin' th' bill! . . . I'll watch it! I

keeps a good tally ov wot I gets, tho' I can't read nor write like them young 'know-alls' over there" (Martin had no love for 'brassbonders'), "them wot orter be aft in their proper place, an' not sittin' 'ere, chinnin' wi' th' sailormen!"

"Who's chinnin'?" said Jones, Martin's particular enemy. "Ain't said a word! Not but what I wanted to . . . sittin' here, listenin' to a lot of bally rot about ye'r dead horses an' logs an' that!"

Jones rose with a great pantomime of disgust (directed especially at the old man), and went aft, leaving Munro and me to weather Martin's rage.

"Oh, shut up, Martin!" said the bo'sun. "They ain't doin' no 'arm! Boys is boys!"

"Ho no, they ain't, bo'sun: not in this ship! Boys is men, an' men's old beggars, 'ere! I don't 'old wi' them a-comin' forrard at awl!"

"Well, well now! . . . Them young 'uns is 'ere for hin-for-mashun, I sh'd sye."

Martin grumbled loudly and turned to counting his notches. "Know-alls! That's wot *they* is—ruddy know-alls! Told me I didn't know wot a fair win' wos!" he muttered as he fingered his 'log.'

"'Dead 'oss?'" said the bo'sun, turning to Munro. "'Dead 'oss' is th' fust month out, w'en

ye're workin' for ye'r boardin'-mawster. 'E gets ye'r month's advawnce w'en ye sails, an' ye've got to work that hoff afore ye earns any pay! . . . Ayint ye nivr 'eard th' *chantey* wot they sings abaht it? . . . In them old packets, where they 'ad passigers as wos allus took hup wi' them songs,—th' han's use t' rig hup a dummy, stuff 'im hup wi' ol' clothes, put 'im hon a gratin' an' drag 'im aft,—them singin' hout like billy-oh! . . . If they 'ad a Hold Man wot wos keen abaht them ol' customs, p'raps 'e 'd stan' awl 'ans a drink. Good rousin' song, it wos, like this 'ere—"

Bosun Hicks had little music in him. In thundering voice and mean tune, he roared a snatch of the *chantey*,—Old Martin beating time with his yard-stick.

Oh, sye, 'ol man, y'er 'orse is dead!
(An' we syes so, an' we 'opes so,)
Get up from hoff y'er feather bed!
(Oh! Poor—hold—man!)

"Who vass ride your 'dead 'oss,' Martin?" asked the Belgian when quiet was restored.

"Oh, Jemmy Grant; 'im wot 'as an 'ouse in Springfield Lane. Come in t' th' Clyde in th' *Loch Ness* from Melb'un—an' twel' poun' ten of a pay day! Dunno' 'ow it went. . . . Spent it awl in four or five days. I put up at Jemmy Grant's for a week 'r two arter th' money was gone, an' 'e

guv' me five bob an' a new suit of oilskins out 'er my month's advawnce on this 'ere 'ooker!"

"Indeed to goodness, now! That iss not pad at all, indeed," said John Lewis, our brawny Welshman. "I came home in th' *Wanderer*, o' St. Johnss, an' wass paid off with thirty-fife poun'ss, I tell 'oo. I stayed in Owen Evanss' house in Great Clyde Street, an' when I went there I give him ten poun'ss t' keep for me. 'Indeed, an' I will, m' lad,' he sayss, 'an' 'oo can have it whenever 'oo likes,' he sayss. . . . Damn him for a rogue——!"

Martin laughed. "Well, ye was soft. Them blokes' bizness is keepin', ain't it?"

"Iss, indeed! Well, I tell 'oo, I got in trouble with a policeman in th' Broomielaw. It took four o' them to run me in, indeed!" pleasantly reminiscent; "an' the next mornin' I wass put up for assaultin' th' police. 'I don't know nothin' about it,' I sayss, when the old fella' asked me. 'Thirty shillins' or fourteen days,' he sayss! . . . Well, I didn't half any money left, but I told a policeman, and he said he would send for Owen Evanss. . . . After a while Evanss come to the office, an' they took me in. I was quite quiet, indeed, bein' sober, I tell 'oo. . . . 'Owen, *machgen-i*,' I sayss, 'will 'oo pay the thirty shillin's out of the ten poun'ss I give 'oo?' 'What ten poun'ss?' he sayss. 'What ten poun'ss?' I sayss. '*Diwedd-i*, the ten poun'ss

I give 'oo t' keep for me,' I sayss. 'Ten poun'ss,' he sayss, 'ten poun'ss to keep for 'oo, an' it iss two weeks' board an' lodgin' 'oo are owin' me, indeed!' 'Damn 'oo!' I sayss. 'Did I not give 'oo ten poun'ss when I wass paid off out of the *Wanderer* an' 'oo said 'oo would keep it for me and give it back again when I wanted it?' I sayss. . . . 'What are 'oo talkin' about?' he sayss. ' 'Oo must be drunk, indeed!' . . . 'Have 'oo got a receipt for it, m' lad?' sayss the Sergeant. 'No, indeed,' I sayss. 'I didn't ask him for a receipt.' . . . 'Oh,' he sayss, 'we've heard this pefore,' he sayss, shuttin' th' book an' signin' to the policeman to put me away. I made for Owen Evanss, but there wass too many policemen indeed. . . . So I had to serve the month, I tell 'oo!" John stroked his beard mournfully, muttering, "Ten poun'ss, indeed! Ten poun'ss, py damm!"

"An didn't ye git square wi' th' bloke wot done ye?" asked the bo'sun.

"Oh, iss! Iss, indeed!" John brightened up at thought of it. "When I came out I went straight to Great Clyde Street an' give him th' best hidin' he effer got, I tell 'oo! I took ten poun'ss of skin an' hair out of him pefore th' police came. Fine! I think it wass fine, an I' had to do two months for that. . . . When I come out the street wass full of policemen, indeed, so I

signed in this barque an' sold my advance note to a Jew for ten pob!"

Ten shillings! For what, if the discounteer saw to it that his man went to sea, was worth three pounds when the ship had cleared the Channel! On the other hand, Dan Nairn, a Straits of Canso sailor-farmer (mostly farmer), had something to say.

"Waall, boy-ees, they ain't awl like that, I guess! I came acraus caow-punchin' on a Donalds'n cattle boat, an' landed in Glasgow with damn all but a stick ov chewin' tebaccer an' two dallars, Canad'n, in my packet. I put up with a Scowwegian in Centre Street; a stiff good feller too! Guess I was 'baout six weeks or more in 'is 'aouse, an' *he* give me a tidy lot 'er fixin's—oilskins an' sea-boots an' awl—out'er my month's advance."

"Oh, some is good and some ain't," said Martin. "Ah knowed a feller wot 'ad an 'ard-up boardin'-'ouse in Tiger Bay. Awl th' stiffes in Cardiff use' ter lay back on 'im w'en nobody else 'ud give 'em 'ouse room—hoodlums an' Dagos an' Greeks wot couldn't get a ship proper. 'E 'ad rooms in 'is 'ouse fitted up wi' bunks like a bloomin' fo'cs'le, an' 'is crowd got their grub sarved out, same's they wos at sea. Every tide time 'e wos down at th' pier-'ead wi' six or seven of 'is gang—'ook-pots an' pannikins, an' bed an' piller—waitin' their

chanst ov a 'pier-'ead jump.' That wos th' only way 'e could get 'is men away, 'cos they worn't proper sailormen as c'd go aboard a packet 'n ast for a sight like you an' me. Most of 'em 'ad bad discharges or dead-'un's papers or somethin'! 'Pier-'ead jumps,' they wos, an' they wouldn't never 'a' got a ship, only f'r that feller an' 'is 'ard-up boardin'-'ouse."

Martin picked up his precious 'log, and turned to go below. "Anyways, good or bad," he said, "them 'sharks' 'as got my ol' iron fer the last month, an' if this worn't a starvation bloomin' Scotch packet, an' a crew of bloomin' know-alls," fixing me with a fancy curl of lip, "we'd a *chanteyed* th' 'dead 'orse' aft t'night an' ast th' Ol' Man t' splice the mainbrace."

He passed into the forecastle, and through the open door we could hear him sing a snatch of the 'dead horse' *chantey*:—

"But now th' month is up, ol' turk!
(An' we says so, an' we 'opes so.)
Get up, ye swine, an' look fer work!
(Oh! Poor—ol'—man!)"

"Get up, ye swine, an' look fer graft!
(An' we says so, an' we 'opes so.)
While we lays on an' yanks ye aft!
(Oh! Poor—ol'—man!)"

V

'SEA PRICE'

AT first weak and baffling, the south-east trades strengthened and blew true as we reached away to the south'ard under all sail. Already we had forgotten the way of bad weather. It seemed ages since we had last tramped the weltering decks, stamping heavily in our big sea-boots for warmth, or crouching in odd corners to shelter from the driven spray, the bitter wind and rain. Now we were fine-weather voyagers—like the flying-fish and the albacore, and bonita, that leapt the sea we sailed in. The tranquil days went by in busy sailor work; we spent the nights in a sleepy languor, in semi-wakefulness. In watch below we were assured of our rest, and even when 'on deck'—save for a yawning pull at sheet or halyard when the Mate was jealous of our idling, or a brief spell at wheel or look-out—were at liberty to seek out a soft plank and lie back, gazing up at the gently swaying mastheads till sleep came again. Higher and higher, as the days went by, the southern stars rose from the sea-line, while—in the north—homely constellations dipped and were

lost to view. Night by night we had the same true breeze, the sea unchanged, the fleecy trade clouds forming on the sea-line—to fade ere they had reached the zenith. There seemed no end to our pleased progress! Ah, it is good to be alive and afloat where the trades blow. Down south, there!

But, in spite of the fine weather and the steady breeze, there were signs of what our voyage would be when the 'barefoot days' were done. Out beyond the clear sky and tender clouds, the old hands saw the wraith of the rugged Cape that we had yet to weather. The impending wrestle with the rigours of the Horn sent them to their preparations when we had scarce crossed the Line. Old Martin was the fore hand. Now, his oilskins hung out over the head, stretched on hoops and broomsticks, glistening in a brave new coat of oil and blacking. Then Vootgert and Dutch John took the notion, and set to work by turns at a canvas wheel-coat that was to defy the worst gale that ever blew. Young Houston—canny Shetlander—put aside his melodeon and clicked and clicked his needles at a famous pair of north-country hose. Welsh John and M'Innes—the Celtic twins—clubbed their total outfit and were busy overhauling, while Bo'sun Hicks spent valuable time and denied us his yarns while he forti-

fied his leaky bunk by tar and strips of canvas. Even Wee Laughlin, infected by the general industry of the forecastle, was stitching away (long, outward-bound stitches) at a cunning arrangement of trousers that would enable him to draw on his two pairs at once. All had some preparation to make—all but we brassbounders!

We saw no farther than the fine weather about us. Most had been round the Horn before, and we should have known; but there was no old 'steady-all' to ballast our cock-a-boat, and we scorned the wisdom of the forecastle. 'Good enough t' be goin' on with,' and 'come day, go day'—were our mottoes in the half-deck. Time enough, by and by, when the weather showed a sign! We had work enough when on duty to keep us healthy! Fine days and 'watch below' were meant for lazying—for old annuals of the B.O.P., for Dick's Standards, for the Seaside Library! Everyone knows that the short dog-watches were meant for sing-song and larking, and, perhaps, a fight or two! What did we care if Old Martin and his mates were croak, croal, croakin' about 'standin' by' and settin' th' gear handy? We were 'hard cases,' all of us, even young Munro and Burke, the 'nipper' of the starboard watch! *We* didn't care! *We* could stand the racket! *Huh!*

So we lazied the fine days away, while our sea harness lay stiffening in the dark lockers.

Subtly, almost imperceptibly, the weather changed. There was a chill in the night air; it was no longer pleasant to sleep on deck. The stars were as bright, the sky as clear, the sea as smooth; but when the sun had gone, damp vapours came and left the deck chill and clammy to the touch. . . . ‘Barefoot days’ were over!

Still and all, the ‘times’ were good enough. If the flying-fish no longer swept from under the bows in a glistening shoal, the trades yet served as well. The days drew on. The day when we shifted the patched and threadbare tropic sails and bent our stoutest canvas in their place; the day when Sann’y Armstrong, the carpenter, was set to make strong weatherboards for the cabin skylights; the day—a cloudy day—when the spars were doubly lashed and all spare fittings sent below. We had our warning; there were signs, a plenty!

All too soon our sunny days came to an end. The trades petered out in calms and squally weather. Off the River Plate a chill wind from the south set us to ‘tack and tack,’ and when the wind hauled and let us free to our course again, it was only to run her into a gale on the verge of the ‘Forties.’

Then for three days we lay hove-to, labouring among heavy seas.

The 'buster' fairly took our breath away. The long spell of light winds had turned us unhandy for storm work. The swollen ropes, stiffened in the block-sheaves, were stubborn when we hauled; the wet, heavy canvas that thrashed at us when stowing sail proved a fighting demon that called for all our strength; the never-ending small work in a swirl of lashing water found us slow and laboured at the task.

All this was quickly noted by the Mate, and he lost no time in putting us to rights. Service in New Bedford whalers had taught him the 'Yankee touch,' and, as M'Innes put it, he was 'no' slow' with his big hands.

"Lay along here, sons," he would roar, standing to the braces. . . . "Lay along, sons;—ye know what sons I mean! . . . Aft here, ye lazy hounds, and see me make 'sojers,' sailors! !"

With his language we had no great grievance. We could appreciate a man who said things—sailorlike and above board—but when it came to knocking a man about (just because he was 'goin' t' get his oilskins,' when the order was 'aloft, an' furl') there were ugly looks here and there. We had our drilling while the gale lasted, and, when it cleared, our back muscles were 'waking up.'

Now—with moderate weather again—famous preparations began in the half-deck; everyone of us was in haste to put his weather armour to rights. Oilskins, damp and sticking, were dragged from dark corners. “Rotten stuff, anyway. We’ll have no more of Blank’s outfits, after this,” we said, as we pulled and pinched them apart. “Oh, damn! I forgot about that stitchin’ on the leg of my seaboot,” said one. “Wish I’d had time t’ put a patch on here,” said another, ruefully holding out his rubbers. “Too far gone for darning,” said Eccles. “Here goes,” and he snipped the feet part from a pair of stockings and tied a rope-yarn at the cut!

We were jeered at from the forecastle. Old Martin went about *clucking* in his beard. At every new effort on our part, his head went nod, nod, nodding. “Oh, them brassbounders!” he would say. “Them ruddy ‘know-alls’! Wot did I tell ye, eh? Wot did I tell ’em, w’en we was a-crossin’ th’ Line, eh? An’ them’s th’ fellers wot’ll be a-bossin’ of you an’ me, bo’sun! Comin’ th’ ‘hard case,’ like the big feller aft there!”

Martin was right, and we felt properly humbled when we sneaked forward in search of assistance. Happily, in Dan Nairn we found a cunning cobbler, and for a token in sea currency—a plug or two of hard tobacco—he patched and mended our boots.

With the oilskins, all our smoothing and pinching was hopeless. The time was gone when we could scrub the sticky mess off and put a fresh coating of oil on the fabric.

Ah! We pulled long faces now and thought that, perhaps, sing-song and larking, and Dicks's Standards and the Seaside Library are not good value for a frozen soaking off the Horn!

But there was still a haven to which we careless mariners could put in and refit. The Captain's 'slop chest'—a general store, where oilskins were 'sea priced' at a sovereign, and sea-boots could be had for thirty shillings! At these figures they would have stood till they crumbled in a sailor-town shop window, but 50° S. is a world away from Broomielaw Corner, and we were glad enough to be served, even if old Niven, the steward, did pass off old stock on us.

"Naw! Ye'll no' get ye'r pick! Ye'll jist tak' whit 's gien' ye . . . or nane ava'!"

Wee Laughlin was a large buyer. He—of us all—had come to sea 'same 's he was goin' t' church!' A pier-head jump! So far, he had borrowed and borrowed, but even good-natured Dutch John was learning English, and would say, "Jou come to *mein haus und* stay mit me," or "*Was für* jou nod trink less *und* buy somet'ings," at each wily approach.

On the day when ‘slops’ were served out, the Pride of Rue-en’ Street was first at the cabin door. As he was fitted and stepped along forward with his purchases, the bo’sun saw him, and called: “Hello! Oilskins an’ sea-boots an’ new shirts, eh? I see ye’re outward bound, young feller!” Laughlin leered and winked, cunning-like.

“What d’ye mean by outward bound,” asked Munro. “We’re all outward bound, an’t we?”

“Of course; of course,” said Hicks. “All outward bound! But w’en I says it that wye, I mean as Lawklin is a-spendin’ of ’is ‘dibs,’ . . . meanin’ t’ desert w’en we gets out! If ’e don’t ’op it as soon as we anchors in ’Frisco Bay, ye kin call me a ruddy Dutchman!”

“Desert? But that’s serious?”

“Ho no! Not there it ain’t! Desertin’ ’s as easy as rollin’ off a log, . . . out there! D’ye think th’ queer-fella’ is goin’ t’ pay them prices for ’is kit, if ’e wos goin’ t’ stop by her in ’Frisco? Not much ’e ain’t! An’ ye kin tike it as a few more is goin’ t’ ’op it, or ye wouldn’t see so many of ’em aft ’ere for their bloomin’ ‘sundries!’”

“*Wel, wel*, now! These prices is not pad, indeed,” said Welsh John, who had joined us. “I haf paid more than three shillin’ for a knife pefore!”

“*Heh! Heh!*” The bo’sun laughed. “When

a 'Taffy' that's a-buyin' says that, ye may say it's right! . . . But, blimy—the boot's on th' other foot w'en it's 'Taffy' as is a-sellin'! *Heh! Heh!* There wos Old Man Lewis of th' *Vanguard*, o' Liverpool, that I signed in! Blimy! 'e could tell ye wot 'sea price' is!"

"Good ol' 'sea price,' " said Martin. "Many an' 'appy 'ome, an' garden wit' a flagstaff, is built o' 'sea price'!"

"Right, ol' son! Right," continued the bo'sun. "Old Man Lewis owned a row of 'em, . . . down in Fishguard. . . . I sailed in th' *Vanguard* out o' Liverpool t' Noo York an' then down south, 'ere—boun' t' Callao. Off th' Falklan's, the Old Man opens out 'is bloomin' slop-chest an' starts dealin'. A pound for blankits wot ye c'd shoot peas through an' fifteen bob for serge skirts—same kind as th' Sheenies sells a' four an' tanner in th' Mawrsh! Of course, nobody 'ud buy 'em in at that price, though we wos all 'parish rigged'—us bein' 'bout eight months out from 'ome. If we 'ad been intendin' t' leave 'er, like th' queer-fella, there, it 'ud a bin all right, but we 'ad 'bout twenty-five poun' doo each of us, an' we wasn't keen on makin' th' Old Man a n'ansome presint!"

"How could he get that?"

"'Ow could 'e get it? Easy 'nuff, in them days! As soon as we 'ad a bin over th' rail, 'e 'ud 'ave

us down in ’is bloomin’ book—slops supplied—five pun’ ’ere—six pun’ there—an’ so on! . . . Well, I was sayin’ as we was goin’ south, round th’ ’Orn! Winter time it was—an’ cold! Cruel! Ye couldn’t tell who ye’r feet belonged to till yē ’ad ye’r boots off. West an’ sou’-west gales, ’ard runnin’, . . . an’ there we wos, away t’ hell an’ gone south’ o’ th’ reg’lar track!

“I wos at the wheel one day, an’ I ’eard th’ Old Man an’ th’ Mate confabbin’ ’bout th’ ship’s position.

“ ‘Fifty-nine, forty, south,’ says th’ Mate. ‘Antarctic bloody exploration, I call this!’ . . . ’E was frappin’ ’is ’an’s like a Fenchurch cabby. . . . ‘It’s ’bout time ye wos goin’ round, Capt’n! She’d fetch round ‘Cape Stiff’ with a true west wind! She’ll be in among th’ ice soon, if ye don’t alter th’ course! Time we was gettin’ out o’ this,’ says he, ‘with two of th’ han’s frost-bit an’ th’ rest of us ’bout perishin’!’

“ ‘Oh no,’ says old Lewis. ‘No, indeed! Don’t you make any mistike, Mister! South’s th’ course, . . . south till I sells them fine blankits an’ warm shirts!’ ”

VI

ROUNDING THE HORN

ROUNDING Cape Horn from the eastward, setting to the teeth of the great west wind, to the shock and onset of towering seas; furious combination of the elements that sweep unchecked around the globe!

Days passed, and we fared no farther on. North we would go with the yards hard on the back-stays; to wear ship, and steer again south over the same track. Hopeless work it was, and only the prospect of a slant—a shift of wind that would let us to our journey—kept us hammering doggedly at the task.

Day after day of huge sea and swell, mountainous in calm or storm. Leaden-grey skies, with a brief glint of sunshine now and then—for it was nominally summer time in low latitudes. Days of gloomy calm, presage of a fiercer blow, when the Old Man (Orcadian philosopher that he was) caught and stuffed skilfully the great-winged albatross that flounders helpless, when the wind fails. Days of strong breezes, when we tried to beat to windward under a straining main-to'gal'nsail;

[illegible][illegible]

(۱) $\frac{1}{2} \frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{1}{2} \frac{d^2}{dt^2} \right) = \frac{1}{2} \frac{d^3}{dt^3}$

weather, to keep the bogie-stove alight. We would gladly have shifted to these warmer quarters, but our parents had paid a premium for *privileged berthing*, and the Old Man would not hear of our flitting. Happily, we had little darkness to add to the misery of our passage, for the sun was far south, and we had only three hours of night. Yet, when the black squalls of snow and sleet rolled up from the westward, there was darkness enough. At times a flaw in the wind—a brief veering to the south—would let us keep the ship travelling to the westward. All hands would be in high spirits; we would go below at the end of our watches, making light of sodden bedclothes, heartened that at last our ‘slant’ had come. Alas for our hopes! Before our watch was due we would be rudely wakened. “*All hands wear ship*”—the dreaded call, and the Mate thundering at the half-deck door, shouting orders in a threatening tone that called for instant spur. Then, at the braces, hanging to the ropes in a swirl of icy water, facing up to the driving sleet and bitter spray, that cut and stung like a whiplash. And when at last the yards were laid to the wind, and the order ‘*down helm*’ was given, we would spring to the rigging for safety, and, clinging desperately, watch the furious sweep of a towering ‘grey-

beard' over the barque, as she came to the wind and lay-to.

Wild, heart-breaking work! Only the old hands, 'hard cases' like Martin and Welsh John and the bo'sun, were the stoics, and there was some small comfort in their "Whoo! This ain't nuthin'! Ye sh'd a' bin shipmates with me in the ol' *Bory-allus!*" (Or some such ancient craft.) "*Them* wos 'ard times!"

Twice we saw Diego Ramirez and the Iledefonsos, with an interval of a fortnight between the sightings—a cluster of bleak rocks, standing out of surf and broken water, taking the relentless battery of huge seas that swept them from base to summit. Once, in clear weather, we marked a blue ridge of land far to the norrard, and Old Martin and Vootgert nearly came to blows as to whether it was Cape Horn or the False Cape.

Fighting hard for every inch of our laboured progress, doubling back, crossing, recrossing (our track on the old blue-back chart was a maze of lines and figures) we won our way to 70° W., and there, in the hardest gale of the passage, we were called on for tribute, for one more to the toll of sailor lives claimed by the rugged southern gate-man.

All day the black ragged clouds had swept up from the south-west, the wind and sea had in-

creased hourly in violence. At dusk we had shortened sail to topsails and reefed foresail. But the Old Man hung on to his canvas as the southing wind allowed us to go 'full and by' to the nor'-west. Hurtling seas swept the decks, tearing stout fittings from their lashings. The crazy old half-deck seemed about to fetch loose with every sea that crashed aboard. From stem to stern there was no shelter from the growing fury of the gale; but still the Old Man held to his course to make the most of the only proper 'slant' in six weary weeks.

At midnight the wind was howling slaughter, and stout Old Jock, dismayed at last at the furious sea upreared against him, was at last forced to lay her to. In a piping squall of snow and sleet we set to haul up the foresail. Even the nigger could not find heart to rouse more than a mournful *i—o—ho* at the buntlines, as we slowly dragged the heavy slatting canvas to the yard. Intent on the work, we had no eye to the weather, and only the Captain and steersman saw the sweep of a monster sea that bore down on us, white-crested and curling.

"Stand by," yelled the Old Man. "Hang on, for your lives, men! Christ! Hold hard there!"

Underfoot we felt the ship falter in swing—an

ominous check in her lift to the heaving sea. Then out of the blackness to windward a swift towering crest reared up—a high wall of moving water, winged with leagues of tempest at its back. It struck us sheer on the broadside, and shattered its bulk aboard in a whelming torrent, brimming the decks with a weight that left no life in the labouring barque. We were swept to leeward at the first shock, a huddled mass of writhing figures, and dashed to and fro with the sweep of the sea. Gradually, as the water cleared, we came by foothold again, sorely bruised and battered.

“Haul away again, men!” The Mate, clearing the blood of a head wound from his eyes, was again at the foretack giving slack. “Hell! what ye standing at? Haul away, blast ye! Haul an’ rouse her up!”

Half-handed, we strained to raise the thundering canvas; the rest, with the Second Mate, were labouring at the spare spar, under which Houston, an ordinary seaman, lay jammed with his thigh broken. Pinching with handspikes, they got him out and carried aft, and joined us at the gear; and at last the sail was hauled up. “*Aloft and furl*,” was the next order, and we sprang to the rigging in time to escape a second thundering ‘greybeard.’

It was dark, with a black squall making up to

windward, as we laid out on the yard and grappled with the wet and heavy canvas. Once we had the sail up, but the wind that burst on us tore it from our stiffened fingers. Near me a grown man cried with the pain of a finger-nail torn from the flesh. We rested a moment before bending anew to the task.

“Handy now, laads!” the Second Mate at the bunt was roaring down the wind. “Stick t’ it, ma herts, . . . hold aal, now! . . . Damn ye, hold it, you. Ye haandless sojer! . . . Up, m’ sons; up an’ hold aal.”

Cursing the stubborn folds, swaying dizzily on the slippery footropes, shouting for hold and gasket, we fought the struggling wind-possessed monster, and again the leach was passed along the yard. A turn of the gasket would have held it, but even the leading hands at the bunt were as weak and breathless as ourselves. The squall caught at an open lug, and again the sail bellied out, thrashing fiendishly over the yard.

There was a low but distinct cry, “Oh, Christ!” from the quarter, and M’Innes, clutching wildly, passed into the blackness below. For a moment all hands clung desperately to the jackstay, fending the thrashing sail with bent heads; then some of the bolder spirits made to come off the yard. . . . “The starboard boat . . . Who? . . . Duncan

. . . It's Duncan gone. . . Quick there, the star . . . the lashings!"

The Second Mate checked their movement.

"No! No! Back, ye fools! Back, I say! Man canna' help Duncan now!"

He stood on the truss of the yard, grasping the stay, and swung his heavy sea-boot menacingly.

"Back, I say! Back, an' furl the sail, . . . if ye wouldna' follow Duncan!"

Slowly we laid out the yard again, and set sullenly to master Duncan's murderer.

A lull came. We clutched and pounded at the board-like cloths, dug with hooked fingers to make a crease for handhold, and at last turned the sail to the yard, though lubberly and ill-furled.

One by one, as our bit was secured, we straggled down the rigging. Some of the hands were aft on the lee side of the poop, staring into the darkness astern—where Duncan was. Munro, utterly unmanned, was crying hysterically. In his father's country manse, he had known nothing more bitter than the death of a favourite collie. Now he was at sea, and by his side a man muttered, "Dead?—My God, I *hope* he's dead, . . . out there!"

The Old Man crossed over from the weather side, and addressing the men, said: "The Second Mate tells me ye wanted t' get t' th' boat when M'Innes

. . . . went. . . . I'm pleased that ye've that much guts in ye, but I could risk no boat's crew in a sea like this. . . . Besides, I'm more-ally certain that M'Innes was dead before he took the water. Eh, Mister?"

"Aye . . . dead," said the Mate. "I saw him strike the to'gal'nt rail, and no man could live after a blow like that. Dead, sure!"

Old Jock returned to his post under the weather-cloth, and the Mate ordered the watch below.

So Duncan took his discharge, and a few days later, in clearing weather, his few belongings were sold at the mast. It was known that he wasn't married, but Welsh John, who knew him best, said he had spoken of his mother in Skye; and the Old Man kept a few letters and his watch that he might have something besides his money to send to Duncan's relatives.

As if Duncan had paid our toll for rounding the storm-scarred Cape, the weather cleared and winds set fair to us after that last dread night of storm. Under a press of canvas we put her head to the norrard, and soon left the rigours of the Horn astern.

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One night, in the middle watch, when we had nearly run out the south-east trades, I went forward, looking for someone to talk to, or any-

thing to relieve the tedium of my two hours on the lee side of the poop. I found Welsh John sitting on the main-hatch and disposed to yarn. He had been the most intimate with Duncan, harkening to his queer tales of the fairies in Knoidart when we others would scoff, and naturally the talk came round to our lost shipmate.

It was bright moonlight, and the shadow of sails and rigging was cast over the deck. Near us, in the lee of the house, some sleepers lay stretched. The Mate stepped drowsily fore and aft the poop, now and then squinting up at the royals.

"I wonder what brought Duncan to a wind-jammer," I said. "He was too old to be starting the sea, an' there were plenty of jobs on the river for a well-doin' man like him."

Welsh John spat carefully on the deck, and, after looking round, said, "Tuncan was here, indeed, because he thought the police would bother him. He told me he wass in a small steamboat that runs from Loch Fyne to the Clyde, an' the skipper was a man from Killigan or Kalligan, near Tuncan's place."

"Kyle-akin," I suggested.

"That iss it, Kyle-akin; an' he wass very far in drink. They started from Inverary for the river, and it wass plowin' strong from the south-east, an' the small boat wass makin' very bad weather,

indeed. The skipper wass very trunk, an' Tuncan, who wass steerin', said they should put in to shelter for the night. But the skipper wass quarrelsome, an' called Tuncan a coward an' a nameless man from Skye, an' they came to plows. Tuncan let go the tiller, an' the small boat came broadside on, and shipped a big sea, an' when Tuncan got to the tiller an' put it up, the skipper was gone. They never saw him, so they came on to the Clyde, where Tuncan left the poat. An' they were askin' questions from him, an' Tuncan was afraid; but indeed to goodness he had no need to pe. So he shipped with us—a pier-head jump it wass. . . .”

A sleeper stirred uneasily, rolled over, and cursed us for a pair of chatterin' lawyers.

We were both quiet for a moment or two; then the strident voice of the Mate rang out, “Boy! Boy! Where the hell have you got to now? Lay aft and trim the binnacle!”

I mounted the poop ladder, muttering the usual excuse about having been to see the side-lights. I trimmed the lamps, and as it was then a quarter to four, struck one bell and called the watch. As I waited on the poop to strike the hour, the men were turning out forward, and I could hear the voice of the eldest apprentice chiding the laggards in the

half-deck. I thought of Duncan, and of what Welsh John had told me.

“Aye, aye, that was Duncan. That was the way of it. I always wond——”

Cla — clang — Cla — clang — Cla — clang — Cla—clang.

The Mate, anxious to get his head on pillow, had flogged the clock and had struck eight bells himself.

VII

A HOT CARGO

SHOREFOLK can have but a hazy idea of all that it means to the deep-water sailor when at last, after long voyaging, the port of his destination heaves in sight. For months he has been penned up on shipboard, the subject of a discipline more strict than that in any way of life ashore. The food, poor in quality, and of meagre allowance at the best, has become doubly distasteful to him. The fresh water has nearly run out, and the red rusty sediment of the tank bottoms has a nauseating effect and does little to assuage the thirst engendered by salt rations. Shipmates have told and retold their yarns, discussions now verge perilously on a turn of fisticuffs. He is wearying of sea life, is longing for a change, for a break in the monotony of day's work and watch-keeping, of watch-keeping and day's work.

A welcome reaction comes on the day when he is ordered to put the harbour gear in readiness. Generally he has only a hazy notion of the ship's position (it is sea fashion to keep that an Officers' secret), and the rousing up of the long idle anchor

chains and tackle is his first intimation that the land is near, that any day may now bring the shore to view, that soon he will be kicking his heels in a sailor-town tavern, washing off his 'salt casing' with lashings of the right stuff.

This was in part our case when we were a hundred and forty days out from the Clyde. The food was bad and short allowance; the key of the pump was strictly guarded, but we had excitement enough and to spare, for, six days before our 'landfall,' the bo'sun discovered fire in the forehold that had evidently been smouldering for some time, was deep-seated, and had secured a firm hold.

It was difficult to get at the fire on account of the small hatchway, and notwithstanding the laboured efforts of all hands, we were at last obliged to batten the hatches down and to trust to a lucky 'slant' to put us within hail of assistance. The water which we had so fruitlessly poured below had all to be pumped out again to get the ship in sailing trim; and heart-breaking work it was, with the wheezy old pump sucking every time the ship careened to leeward. Anxiety showed on all faces, and it was with great relief that, one day at noon, we watched the Mate nailing a silver dollar to the mizzenmast. The dollar was his who should first sight the distant shore.

We held a leading wind from the norrard, and when, on the afternoon of a bright day, we heard the glad shout from the fore-tops'l yard—"Land-oh"—we put a hustle on our movements, and, light at heart, found excuse to lay aloft to have a faraway look at God's good earth again. It was the Farallone Islands we had made—thirty miles west from the Golden Gate—a good landfall. Dutch John was the lucky man to see it first, and we gave him a cheer as he laid aft to take the dollar off the mast.

In the second dog-watch we hung about the decks discussing prospective doings when we set foot ashore, and those who had been in 'Frisco before formed centres of inquiry and importance. From the bearing of the land, we expected orders to check in the yards, but, greatly to our surprise, the Mate ordered us to the lee fore-brace, and seemed to be unable to get the yards far enough forrard to please him. When Wee Laughlin came from the wheel at eight bells, we learned that the ship was now heading to the nor'east, and away from our port; and the old hands, with many shakings of the head, maintained that some tricky game was afoot. The Old Man and the Mate were colloquing earnestly at the break of the poop; and Jones, who went aft on a pretence of trimming the binnacle, reported that the Old Man was

expressing heated opinions on the iniquity of salvage. At midnight we squared away, but as we approached the land the wind fell light and hauled ahead. Wonder of wonders! This seemed to please the Captain hugely, and his face beamed like a nor'west moon every time he peered into the compass.

Dawn found us well to the norrard of the islands, and close-hauled, standing into the land. From break of day all hands were busy getting the anchors cleared and the cables ranged. Some were engaged painting out the rusty bits on the star-board topside. A 'work-up' job they thought it was until the Mate ordered them to leave the stages hanging over the water abreast of the fore-hatch. Here the iron plating was hot, the paint was blistered off, and every time the ship heeled over there was an unmistakable *sssh* as the water lapped the heated side. This, and the smell of hot iron, was all that there was to tell of our smouldering coal below, but 'Frisco men from the Water Front are sharp as ferrets, and very little would give them an inkling of the state of affairs. Presently we raised the land broad on the port bow, and two of us were perched on the fore-to'gal'nt yard to look out for the pilot schooner; or, if luck was in our way, a tow-boat. The land became more distinct as the day wore on, and the

bearing of several conspicuous hills gave the Captain the position he sought. Before noon we reported smoke ahead, and the Mate, coming aloft with his telescope, made out the stranger to be a tow-boat, and heading for us. We were called down from aloft, and the ship was put about.

We were now, for the second time, heading away from our port; and when the Mate set us to slap the paint on the burned patch, we understood the Old Man's manœuvre, which had the object of preventing the tow-boat from rounding to on our starboard side. Her skipper would there have assuredly seen evidences of our plight, and would not have been slow to take advantage of it.

The tug neared us rapidly (they lose no time on the Pacific slope), and the Captain recognized her as the *Active*.

"She's one of Spreckels' boats," said he, shutting his glass. "Cutbush runs her, an' he's a dead wide ane. If he smells a rat, Mister, we'll be damned lucky if we get into harbour under a couple o' thousand."

We were all excited at the game, though it mattered little to us what our owners paid, as long as we got out of our hot corner. Straight for us he came, and when he rounded our stern and lay up on the lee quarter, the bo'sun voiced the

general opinion that the Old Man had done the trick.

"Morn, Cap.! Guess ye've bin a long time on th' road," sang out the tow-boat's skipper, eyeing our rusty side and grassy counter.

"Head winds," said the Old Man, "head winds, an' no luck this side o' th' Horn."

"Ye're a long way to th' norrard, Cap. Bin havin' thick weather outside?"

"Well, not what ye might call thick, but musty, these last few days. We were lookin' to pick up the Farallones." (The unblushing old Ananias!)

There ensued a conversation about winds and weather, ships and freights, interspersed with the news of five months back. The talk went on, and neither seemed inclined to get to business. At last the tow-boat man broke the ice.

"Wall, Cap., I reckon ye don't want t' stay here all day. Wind's easterly inside, an' there ain't none too much water on th' bar. Ye'd getter give us yer hawser 'n let's git right along."

"Oh! no hurry, Capt'in; there's no hurry. What's a day here or there when ye'r well over the hundreds? I can lay up to th' pilot ground on th' next tack. . . . Ye'll be wantin' a big figure from here, an' my owners won't stand a long pull."

"Only six hundred, Cap., only six hundred, with your hawser."

The Old Man started back in amazement.

"Six hundred dollars, Capt'in. Did you say six hundred? Holy smoke! I don't want t' buy yer boat, Capt'in. . . . Six hundred—well, I'm damned. Loose them royals, Mister! Six hundred, no damn fear!"

Quickly we put the royals on her, though they were little use, the wind having fallen very light. The tow-boat sheered off a bit, and her skipper watched us sheeting-home, as if it were a most interesting and uncommon sight.

He gave his wheel a spoke or two and came alongside again.

"All right, Cap. Give us yer hawser 'n I'll dock ye for five-fifty!"

The Old Man paid no attention to his request, but paced fore and aft the weather side, gazing occasionally at the lazy royals, then fixing the man at the wheel with a reproachful eye. At last he turned to leeward with a surprised expression, as if astonished to find the tow-boat still there.

"Come, Cap.! Strike it right naow! What d'ye offer? Mind the wind, as there is ov it, is due east in the Strait."

The Old Man thought carefully for quite a time. "Hundred 'n fifty, 'n your hawser," he said.

The Captain of the *Active* jammed his bell rod at full speed ahead.

"Good morn', Cap.," he said. "Guess I'll see ye in 'Frisco this side o' the Noo Year." He forged rapidly ahead, and when clear of the bows took a long turn to seaward. The Mate took advantage of his being away and wiped off the paint on the burned patch, which was beginning to smell abominably. Fresh paint was hurriedly put on, and the stages were again aboard when the *Active*, finding nothing to interest her on the western horizon, returned—again to the lee quarter.

"Saay, Cap., kan't we do a deal; kan't we meet somewhere?" said Cutbush, conciliatory.

"Say five hundred or four-eighty, 'n I'll toss ye for th' hawser?"

"I can't do it, Capt'in. . . . I'd lose my job if I went," (here the Old Man paused to damn the steersman's eyes, and to tell him to keep her full) "if I went that length."

The tow-boat again sheered off and her skipper busied himself with his telescope.

"Wall, Cap., she may be a smart barque, but I'm darn ef ye can beat her through the Golden Gate the way th' wind is. Saay! Make it three-fifty? What the hell's about a fifty dollars. Darn me! I've blown that in half-hour's poker!"

"Aye, aye! That's so; but I'm no' takin' a hand in that game. Set the stays'ls, Mister, 'n get a pull on the fore 'n main sheets!"

We went about the job, and the *Active* took another turn, this time to the south'ard. Munro, aloft loosing the staysails, reported a steamer away under the land. She was sending up a dense smoke, and that caused the Old Man to account her another tow-boat out seeking.

"That'll fetch him," he said to the Mate, "'n if he offers again I'll close. Three-fifty's pretty stiff, but we can't complain."

"Egad, no!" said the Mate; "if I'd been you I'd have closed for five hundred, an' be done with it."

"Aye, aye, no doubt! no doubt! But ye're not a Scotchman looking after his owners' interest."

Soon we saw the *Active* smoking up and coming towards us with 'a bone in her mouth.' Cutbush had seen the stranger's smoke, and he lost no time. He seemed to be heading for our starboard side, and we thought the game was up; but the Old Man kept off imperceptibly, and again the tug came to port.

"Changed yer mind, Cap.? Guess I must be gwine back. Got t' take the *Drumeltan* up t' Port Costa in th' mornin'. What d'ye say t' three hundred?"

The Old Man called the Mate, and together they held a serious consultation with many looks to

windward, aloft, and at the compass. The stranger was rapidly approaching, and showed herself to be a yellow-funnelled tow-boat, with a business-like foam about her bows. Spreckels' man was getting fidgety, as this was one of the opposition boats, and he expected soon to be quoting a competitive figure. To his pleased surprise, the Old Man came over to leeward, and, after a last wrangle about the hawser, took him on at the satisfactory figure of three hundred dollars.

We put about, and the Mate had another little deal in burned paint. Courses were hauled up, and the *Active* came along our starboard side to pass the towing wire aboard. The paint hid the patch, and in the manœuvre of keeping clear of our whisker-booms, the smell escaped notice, and the marks of our distress were not noticed by her crew. We hauled the wire aboard and secured the end, and the *Active's* crew heard nothing significant in the cheer with which we set about clewing-up and furling sail.

The afternoon was far spent when we reached the pilot schooner. She was lying at anchor outside the bar, the wind having died away; and as she lifted to the swell, showed the graceful underbody of an old-time 'crack.' The pilot boarded us as we towed past. Scarce was he over the rail before he shouted to the Old Man, "What's the

matter, Cap'n? Guess she looks 's if she had a prutty hot cargo aboard."

"Hot enough, Pilot! Hot enough, b' Goad! We've bin afire forr'ard these last seven days that we know of, and I'm no' sayin' but that I'm glad t' see th' beach again."

"Wall, that's bad, Cap'n. That's bad. Ye won't make much this trip, I guess, when the 'boys' have felt ye over.' He meant when the 'Frisco sharps had got their pickings, and the Old Man chuckled audibly as he replied.

"Oh, we'll chance that—aye, we'll chance that. It's no' so bad 's if Cutbush was gettin' his figger."

"What's he gettin', anyway?"

"Oh, he's doin' verra well. He's doin' verra well," said the Old Man evasively.

We were now approaching the far-famed Golden Gate, the talk of mariners on seven seas. We boys were sent aloft to unrig the chafing gear, and took advantage of our position and the Mate's occupation to nurse the job, that we might enjoy the prospect. The blue headland and the glistening shingle of Drake's Bay to the norrard and the high cliffs of Benita ahead: the land stretching away south, and the light of the westing sun on the distant hills. No wonder that when the Mate called us down from aloft to hand flags there was much of our work left unfinished.

At Benita Point we had a busy time signalling news of our condition to the ship's agents at 'Frisco. After we passed through the Narrows, we had a near view of the wooded slopes of Sausalito, with the white-painted houses nestling comfortably among the trees. Away to the right the undulating plains of the Presidio reached out to the purple haze of the distant city. The Pilot, seeing admiration in our eyes, couldn't hold his pride, even to us boys, and exclaimed aloud on the greatness of the U—nited States in possessing such a seaboard.

"Saay, boys," he said. "Guess yew ain't got nothin' like this in th' old country!"

Young Munro, who was the nearest, didn't let the Pilot away with that, and he mentioned a "glint of Loch Fyre, when the sun was in the west'ard." "And that's only one place I'm speakin' of."

The sun was low behind us as we neared the anchorage, and a light haze softened and made even more beautiful the outlines of the stately City. As we looked on the shore, no one had mind of the long dreary voyage. That was past and done. We had thought only for the City of the West that lay before us, the dream of many long weary nights.

But, as I gazed and turned away, I was sharply minded of what the sea held for us. Houston had

been carried on deck, "t' see th' sights," as he said. His stretcher stood near me, and the sight of his wan face brought up the memory of bitter times 'off the Horn.' Of the black night when we lost Duncan! Of the day when Houston lay on the cabin floor, and the seaman-surgeon and his rude assistants buckled to 'the job'! Of the screams of the tortured lad—"Let me alane! Oh, Christ! Let me al——" till kindly Mother Nature did what we had no means to do! . .

"Man, but it was a tough job, with her rolling and pitching in the track o' th' gale!" The Old Man was telling the Pilot about it. "But there he is, noo! As sound as ye like . . . a bit weak, mebbe, but sound! . . . We'll send him t' th' hospital, when we get settled down. . . . No' that they could dae mair than I've dune." Here a smile of worthy pride. "But a ship's no' the place for scienteefic measures —stretchin', an' rubbin' an' that. . . . Oh, yes! Straight? I'll bate ye he walks as straight as a serjunt before we're ready for sea again!"

As we drew on to the anchorage, a large raft-like vessel with barges in tow made out to meet us. The Old Man turned his glasses on her and gave an exclamation of satisfaction.

"Meyer's been damn smart in sending out the fire-float," he said to the Mate, adding, "Get the

foreyard cock-billed, Mister; and a burton rigged to heave out the cargo as soon's we anchor. There's the tow-boat whistlin' for ye to shorten in th' hawser. Bear a hand, mind ye, for we've a tough night's work before us."

But all was not pleasant anticipation aboard of the screw tug *Active*, towing gallantly ahead, for Captain John Cutbush had discovered his loss, and the world wasn't big enough for his indictment of Fortune.

He had seen our flags off Benita, but had not troubled to read the message, as he saw the answering pennant flying from the Lighthouse. In scanning the anchorage for a convenient berth to swing his tow in, the fire-float caught his eye.

"Hello! somethin' afire in th' Bay!" He turned his glasses among the shipping, in search of a commotion, but all was quiet among the tall ships.

"But where's she lyin'-to fer? There ain't nothin' this side ov Alcatraz, I reckon."

Then a dread suspicion crossed his mind, that made him jump for the signal-book. He remembered the flags of our last hoist, and feverishly turned them up.

"Arrange—assistance—for—arrival."

Muttering oaths, he dropped the book and

focussed his glasses on the tow. The track of the fire was patent to the world now, and we were unbending the sails from the yards above the fore-hatch.

"She's afire right 'nuff, 'n I never cottoned. Roast me for a——. 'N that's what the downy old thief was standin' t' th' norrard for, 'n I never cottoned! 'N that's what he took me on at three hundred for, 'n Meyer's boat almost alongside. Three —— hundred 'n my —— hawser. Waal—I'm—damned! The old limejuice pirate! Guess I should 'a known him for a bloody sharp when I saw Glasgow on her stern."

He stopped cursing, to blow his whistle—a signal for us to shorten in the towing hawser. In the ensuing manœuvres he was able to relieve his feelings by criticising our seamanship; he swung us round with a vicious sheer, eased up, and watched our anchor tumbling from the bows. He gazed despairingly at his Mate, who was steering.

"Here's a ruddy mess, Gee-orge," he said. "Three thousan' dollars clean thrown away. What'll the boss say. What'll they say on th' Front?"

George cursed volubly, and expended much valuable tobacco juice.

"Here's a boomer fer th' 'Examiner,' Geeorge; here's a sweet headline fer th' 'Call'!

“ ‘Cutbush done!’

“ ‘Cap’n Jan Cutbush done in th’ eye! !’

“ ‘Cap’n Jan S. Cutbush, th’ smartest skipper on th’ Front, done in the bloody eye by a bargoo-eatin’ son ef a gun ef a grey-headed lime-juicer! ! !’ ”

VIII

WORK!

SCARCELY was our anchor down in 'Frisco Bay than the boarding-house masters were alongside, beaming with good-fellowship, and tumbling over one another in their anxiety to shake 'Jack' by the hand, and to tell him of the glorious openings and opportunities for smart sailormen ashore. The Mate vainly endeavoured to prevent them boarding the ship but with the ordinary harassing duties incident on arrival, and the extraordinary matter of a serious fire in the hold, he could not do everything; so the 'crimps' installed themselves in the fo'cas'le, and the grog (Welcome-home Brand) was flowing far and free.

The starboard watch were aloft furling the tops'ls, and only the presence of the Captain and Mates at the foot of the rigging kept them from joining the hilarious crowd in the fo'cas'le. The Mate's watch had been employed at the ground tackle, and had dodged in and out of the fo'cas'le; so that, in a very short time, they were all 'three sheets in the wind,' and making for trouble. Voot-gert, the Belgian, was the first to fall foul of the

Mate, and that sorely-tried Officer could hardly be blamed for using all four limbs on the offending 'squarehead.' Seeing their shipmate thus handled, the watch would have raised a general mêlée, but the boarding-house 'crimps,' having no liking for police interference, succeeded in calming the valiant ones by further draughts of their fiery panacea. To us boys (who had heard great tales of revolvers and other weapons being freely used by ship captains in preventing their men from being 'got at') these mutinous ongoings were a matter of great wonderment; but, later, we learned that freights were low, and we were likely to be many months in 'Frisco; that crews' wages and victualling, when the ship is earning no money, reflect on the professional character of an old-time shipmaster, and that to baulk the 'crimps' on arrival means an expensive delay in making up a crew when the ship is again ready for sea.

Wee Laughlin and the nigger were the first to yield to the eloquence of their visitors. No one was surprised that the Mate let Laughlin clear without interference. A poor sailor, though a lot had been licked into him since he left the 'Poort,' he was not worth keeping. His kind could be picked up on the Water Front any day. He had come on board at Greenock—a 'pierhead jump' with his wardrobe on his back and a 'hauf-mutchkin'

of very inferior whisky in his pocket. Now, to our astonishment, he threw a well-filled bag over the side before he slid down the rope into the 'crimp's' boat. Long intending to desert when we arrived, he had taken as much of his pay in clothes and slop-chest gear as the Old Man would allow. It was said, too, that a lot of poor Duncan's clothes never came to auction, and more than one suspected Wee Laughlin of a run through Duncan's bag before the Old Niven got forward and claimed what was left.

That well-filled bag!

To the Second Mate, who was eyeing his departure, he flung a salutation, first seeing that his line of retreat was clear. "Weel, so long, Mister, ye Hielan' —, ye can pit ma fower pun ten i' yer e'e 'n ca' yersel' a bloody banker!"

No one saw the nigger go, but gone he was, bag and baggage; and loud were the curses of the cook, to whom he owed four pounds of tobacco for losses at crib.

While all this was going on, and the 'crimps' were marking down their prey, the crew of the fire-float had located the fire and cut a hole in the 'tween-decks above the hottest part. Through this a big ten-inch hose was passed, and soon the rhythmic *clank-clank* of their pump brought 'Frisco Bay to our assistance.

Darkness fell on a scene of uproar. Everything was at sixes and sevens forward, and the discipline of five months was set at naught. Drunken men tumbled over the big hose and slippery decks, and got in the firemen's way; steam enveloped the decks as in a fog; dim figures of men struggled and quarrelled; curses and hoarse shouts came from the fo'cas'le, whence the hands were being driven by the rising smoke and steam; rushing figures transferred their few belongings to safer quarters; and through all throbbed the steady *clank-clank* of the fire-engine.

A strange contrast to the quiet and peaceful scene about us—with a low moon over San Rafael, and the lights of the shipping reflected in the placid water. A few fishing-boats were drifting out on the tide, with creak of oar and rowlock; and above all was the glare of the lighted streets and harbour lights of the great city.

Not long had we to contrast the scenes, for the Mate, and the Old Man himself, were at our backs, man-driving the few sober hands, to make up for their inability to handle the skulkers. They did not spare themselves in driving, and at salving the gear in the lamp-room the Captain made a weird picture, black and grimy, with a cloth over his mouth, passing the lamps out to the boys.

With such a volume of water pouring below, it

was necessary to get a pump in position to keep our craft afloat. She was now far down by the head and had a heavy list, and as the ship's pumps would not draw, the Firemaster arranged to put one of his pumps into the fore-peak. To make this efficient, we had to raise the sluice in the forrard bulkhead; and even the Old Man looked anxious when the Carpenter reported that the sluice was jammed, and that the screw had broken in his hands. The stream of water into the hold was immediately stopped, and all available hands (few enough we were) were put to clearing the fore-peak, that the sluice could be got at. In this compartment all the ship's spare gear and bos'un's stores were kept, and the lower hold held ten tons of the ship's coal. The small hatchway made despatch impossible, and the want of a winch was keenly felt. It was back-breaking work, hauling up the heavy blocks, the cordage, sails and tarpaulins, chains, kegs and coils, and dragging them out on deck. A suffocating atmosphere and foul gases below showed that the seat of the fire was not far off, and often the workers were dragged up in a semi-conscious state. The Mate was the first to go down, and he hung out till nature rebelled, and he was dragged up and put in the open air. There the aggrieved Belgian saw him, and, maddened by drink, took advantage of

his exhaustion to kick him viciously in the ribs; but Jones promptly laid the Dutchman out with a handspike.

In a moment the drink, discontent, excitement, and overwork found vent in furious riot: ship-mates of five months' standing, comrades in fair weather and foul, were at each other's throats, and amid the smoke and steam no man could name his enemy. Welsh John, in trying to get young Munro out of harm's way, was knocked down the open hatch, and he lay, groaning, with a broken arm, amid the steam and stench. Hicks, the bo'sun, was stabbed in the cheek, and someone knocking the lamps over, added darkness to the vicious conflict. Blind and blaspheming, animals all, we fought our way to the doors, and the malcontents, in ill plight themselves, cared little to follow us.

Meantime the Firemaster, seeing how matters stood, called his men together and turned a hose into the fo'cas'le. The thin, vicious stream proved too much for the mutineers, and we were soon in possession again. John was taken up from the fore-peak (he was far through) and carried aft. The mutineers, such as were fit, were put down below to dig coals till they could dig no more; and again the work went on—weary, body-racking work.

With aching eyes and every muscle in revolt, we toiled on in silence, not even a curse among us. Silence, broken only by the rattle of the block-sheave, as the baskets of coal were hove up and emptied. There was now no need for the Old Man to hold himself in readiness, with something in his pocket that bulged prominently, for there was not an ounce of fight left in the crowd, and 'Smith and Wessons' are ill-fitting things to carry about. Two hours we had of this, and give in was very near when the welcome news came up that they had got at the sluice, that the water was trickling through. Soon after, the sluice was prised up, and the pent-up water rushed into the peak. The Firemaster passed his pipe below, and again the pumps were set agoing.

We staggered out into the fresh morning air, red-eyed and ragged, and a madhouse gang we looked in the half-light of an early Californian dawn. Faces haggard and blackened by the smoke, eyes dazed and bloodshot, and on nearly everyone evidence of the ten minutes' sanguinary encounter in bruised eyes and bloody faces. The Mate called a muster to serve out grog, and of our crew of twenty-seven hands only fifteen answered the call. The Old Man tried to make a few remarks to the men. He had been frequently to the bottle through the night, for his speech was thick and his periods uncertain.

“No bloody nozzush, b’ Goad . . . stan’ no nozzush, Mis’r —— ” was about the burden of his lay.

With a modest glass of strong rum to raise our spirits momentarily, we lingered before going below to note the wreck and confusion that our once trim barque was now in. She was still down by the head, and listed at an awkward angle. The decks were littered with gear and stores, muddy and dirty as a city street on a day of rain. Aloft, the ill-furled tops’ls hung bunched below the yards, with lazy gaskets streaming idly in mid-air; and the yards, ‘lifted’ at all angles, gave a lubberly touch to our distressed appearance. The riding-light, still burning brightly on the forestay, though the sun was now above the horizon, showed that we had lost all regard for routine.

A damp mist, the ‘pride o’ the morning,’ was creeping in from seaward, and the siren at the Golden Gate emitted a mournful wail at intervals. Near us, at the anchorage, a big black barque, loaded and in sea-trim, was getting under weigh, and the haunting strain of ‘Shenandoah,’ most beautiful of sea-chanteys, timed by the musical *clank* of the windlass pawls, was borne on the wind to us.

“An outward-bounder, and a blue-nose at that,” said Martin.

We wondered if Wee Laughlin was already in

her fo'cas'le, with a skinful of drugged liquor to reckon with. The 'crimps' lose no time if they can get their man under, and Wee Laughlin, by his own glory of it, was a famous swallower.

In the half-deck, some of the boys were already turned in, and lying in uneasy attitudes, with only their boots and jackets off. Jones, who had been severely handled in the scrimmage, was moaning fitfully in his sleep, his head swathed in bloody bandages, and the pallor showing in his face through the grime and coal-dust. Hansen was the last man in. He threw himself wearily down on the sea-chests, now all of a heap to leeward, snatched a pillow from under Munro's head, and composed himself to rest.

"Mate says I'm to keep watch, 'n call him at eight bells; but, judgin' by th' way he put the grog down, I'm damn sure he'll stir tack nor sheet till midday. . . . Firemaster says she's under hand, 'n he'll have the fire out in two hours, 'n she can bally well look out for herself. . . . T' hell with an anchor watch; I can't keep my eyes open, an' 'll work . . . work . . . no m——"

IX

IN 'FRISCO TOWN

WE moored at Mission Wharf to discharge what cargo the fire had spared, and there we made a lubberly picture, outcast among so many trim ships. The firemen had done their duty and had left us to do ours, and we had to work our hardest to put the ship in order again. A firm of shipwrights were employed to repair the damage—the twisted stanchions, buckled beams, burnt decks, worthless pumps, and hold fittings. Old Jock was not a Scotchman for nothing, and to make their contract profitable, the 'wrights did nothing that they could wriggle out of. So we had extra work to do—their work—and from daylight to dark were kept hard at it, man-driven as only our hardcase Mate could drive. It was no wonder that we were in a state of discontent. Here we were, after a long, hard voyage, working our 'soul-case' to shreds! And there—just across the wharf from us,—was all the life and movement of Market Street, a stage all set for our enjoyment. The coming and going of the high-sided ferries, the ceaseless jaunting of the crowds, the run and clangour of the street cars!

Over along the dockside, swarthy pedlars pushing their handcarts piled high with luscious fruits—cow-bells, slung on a strap between their shafts, giving out notes like children calling. Nigger truckmen perched high above their horses, lazying along at a slow pace as though no such thing as haste and worry and man-driving were in the world!

Every sight of it called to us to run-a-gates, and only a wholesome fear of the Mate's big hands kept us, grumbling, at the task.

With the men forward it was even worse. The word had gone out that no money would be advanced until the cargo was discharged and the ship put to rights. No money—not even the price of a 'schooner'! And the ghost of nigh six months' salt beef waiting to be 'laid'!

Their state of mind was soon observed by the boarding-masters. Whalers were in the Bay, fitted out and ready for sea, and only a lack of sailormen kept them within the Golden Gate. To get these men—the blood-money for their shipment, rather—was the business of the 'crimps,' who showed a wealth of imagination in describing the various topping shore jobs that they held at their disposal. Now it was a 'mine manager' they were looking for in our forecastle; to-morrow it would be a fruit salesman they wanted! They

secured smiling Dutch John as a decoy, and set him up behind the bar of a Water Front saloon. There, when work was over for the day his former shipmates foregathered, and John (fairly sober, considering) put up free drinks and expanded on the goodness of a longshore life.

"Vat jou boysh stop *mit der* ship on? Jou tinks dere vas no jobs on shore? De boardin'-master damn lie, eh? . . . Ah vas get me four dollars a day; *und der* boss, ven 'e see me de glasses break, say me nodings! Ah goes from *der haus* out, *und* comes to *der haus in*—*und* 'e say nod like *der* Mate, 'Vat jou do dere, *verdamt shwine? Was für* jou no go on mit jour vark?' . . . 'ttverdam! It vas *der* life, *mein* boysh! It vas *der* life!"

Against such a pronouncement from their whilom shipmate, and with the plain evidence of his prosperity before their eyes, it was useless to argue. Here was John able to stand free drinks all round, and the saloon boss 'standin' by' and smiling pleasantly. Didn't John say, "Here, boss, jou gif me a light for *mein* cigar!" and the owner of the place handed out his silver box instantan'er? John! A 'Dutchman,' too,—not even the best sailorman of the 'crowd'! . . . ("Here, boss, what was that job ye was talkin' about? I *guess* there ain't nuthin' I can't do w'en I sets

my 'ead to it!") Soon the 'crimps,' ever ready at hand, were off to the ship, hot-foot, for bags and baggage!

Those who still held by the ship were visited at all hours, and the comings and goings of the tempters were not even checked by the Mate. The dinner hour was the most opportune time for them, for then they had the miserable meal to point to in scorn.

"Call yourselves min," they said, "a sittin' here at yer lobscouse an' dawg biscuits, an' forty dallars a month jest waitin' t' be picked up? . . . Forty dallars . . . an' no more graft 'n a boy kin dew! Darn it, I wouldn't give that mess to me dawg! . . . A fine lot yees are, fer sure! Ain't got no heart t' strike aout f'r decent grub 'n a soft job. . . . Forty dallars, I guess! . . . Is thar a 'man' among ye? . . . Chip in your dunnage an' step ashore, me bucks! A soft job in a free country, an' no damn limejuice Mate t' sweat ye araound!"

The spell worked! Within a fortnight of our arrival most of the men who had signed with us had, '*Deserted. Left no effects,*' entered against their names in our official Log. Soon the whalers were at sea, standing to the north, and Dutch John, shorn of his proud position, was shipped as cook on a hard-case New Yorker!

The bo'sun and Old Martin were still with us, and we had Welsh John and Houston safe in the hospital—about the only place in 'Frisco where no healthy 'crimp' could gain admission. For want of better game, perhaps the boarding-masters paid some attention to the half-deck, but we had, in the Chaplain of the British Seamen's Institute, a muscular mentor to guide us aright. From the first he had won our hearts by his ability to put Browne (our fancy man) under the ropes in three rounds. It was said that, in the absence of a better argument, he was able and willing to turn his sleeves up to the stiffest 'crimp' on the Front. Be that as it may, there was no doubt about his influence with brassbounders in the port. Desertions among us—that had formerly been frequent—were rare enough when James Fell came, swinging his stick, to see what was doing on the Front!

With the crew gone, we found matters improved with us. The Mate, having no 'crowd' to rush around, was inclined to take things easy, and, when sober, was quite decent. Although but a few weeks in the country, we were now imbued with the spirit of freedom; learned to 'guess' and 'reckon'; called Tuesday 'Toosday'; and said "No, sir-rr!" when emphatic denial was called for. Eccles even tried the democratic

experiment of omitting his "sir" when answering the Mate. Disastrous result!

Seamanship was shelved, for a time at least, and we were employed like longshore labourers on the ship's hull. The rust and barnacles of our outward passage had to be chipped off and scraped, and we had more than enough of the din of chipping hammers and the stench of patent compositions. One day Burke discovered his elder brother's name painted on the piles of the wharf, and when he told us with pride of the painter's position, 'Captain of a big tramp steamer,' we were consoled by the thought that we were only going through the mill as others had done before us. When the painting was finished we had the satisfaction of knowing that our barque was not the least comely of the many tall ships that lined the wharves.

At night, when work was over, we had the freedom of the City. It was good to be on the beach again. Money was scarce with us, and in a place where five cents is the smallest currency, we found our little stock go fast, if not far. If luxuries were beyond our reach, at least the lighted streets were ours, and it was with a delightful sense of freedom from ship discipline that we sauntered from 'sailor-town' to 'China-town,' or through the giant thoroughfares that span the heart of the City itself. Everything was new, and fine, and strange. The

simple street happenings, the busy life and movements, the glare and gaudery of the lights was the brighter after our long nights in the dark.

'Sailor-town'—the Water Front, was first beyond the gangway. Here were the boarding-houses and garish saloons, the money-changers' and shoddy shops. The boarding-houses were cleaner than the dinginess of an old-world seaport would allow, and the proprietors who manned their door-ways looked genial monuments of benevolence. On occasions they would invite us in—"Come right in, boyees, an' drink the health o' th' haouse," was the word of it—but we had heard of the *Shanghai Passage*, and were chary of their advances. Often our evident distrust was received with boisterous laughter. "Saay," they would shout. "Yew needn't shy, me sucking bloody Nelsons! It's little use yew 'ud be aboard a packet!" . . . "Light—the—binnacle, bo—oy!" was another salutation for brassbounders, but that came usually from a lady at an upper window, and there would be a sailorman there—out of sight, as prompters properly are.

At the clothing shop doors, the Jews were ever on the alert for custom. A cheap way of entertainment was to linger for a moment at their windows, pointing and admiring. Isaac would be at us in a moment, feeling the texture of our jackets

with his bony fingers and calling on the whole street to witness that it was "a biece 'f damn good shduff!" Then it would be, "Gome into de shop, Misdur! I *guess* I god de tingsh you vannt!"

After we had spent a time examining and pricing his scent-bottles and spring garters, and hand-painted braces and flowered velvet slippers and 'Green River' sheath-knives, we thought it but right to tell him that Levy Eckstein of Montgomery Street was our man; that our Captain would pay no bills for us but his!

With Levy our business was purely financial; cent. per cent. transactions in hard cash. He had contracted with the Old Man to supply us with clothing, but, though our bills specified an outfit of substantial dry goods, we were always able to carry away the parcels in our smallest waistcoat pocket. "One dollar for two," was Levy's motto. If his terms were hard, his money was good, and, excepting for the Old Man's grudging advances, we had no other way of 'raising the wind.'

In 'China-town' we found much to astonish us. We could readily fancy ourselves in far Cathay. There was nothing in the narrow streets and fancily carved house fronts to suggest an important City in the States. Quaint shop signs and curious swinging lanterns; weird music and noises in the 'theatres'; uncanny smells from the eating-

houses; the cat-like sound of China talk—all jumbled together in a corner of the most western city of the West!

The artisans in their little shops, working away far into the night, interested us the most, and some of our little money went to purchase small wares for the home folks. It was here that Munro bought that long 'back-scratcher'; the one he took home to his father!

Sometimes, when we could induce our Burke to make up to one of his compatriots (the blue-coated, six-foot Fenians who keep 'Frisco under martial law), we saw something of the real, the underground China-town. It was supposed to be a hazardous excursion, but, beyond treading the dark, forbidding alleys, haunts of 'Li-Johns' and 'Highbinders,' we had no sight of the sensational scenes that others told us of. We saw opium dens, and were surprised at the appearance of the smokers. Instead of the wasted and debauched beings, of whom we had read, we found stout Johns and lean Johns, lively Johns and somnolent Johns, busy and idle—but all looking as if they regarded life as a huge joke.

They laughed amiably at our open mouths, and made remarks to us. These, of course, we were unable to understand, but at least we could grin, and that seemed to be the answer expected. When

our guide took us to free air again, and we found ourselves far from where we had entered, we could readily 'take it from Michael' that the underground passages offered harbour to all the queer fellows of the City. With the night drawing on, and a reminder in our limbs that we had done a hard day's work, we would go to Clark's, in Kearney, a coffee-house famed among brass-bounders. There we would refresh and exchange ship news with 'men' from other ships. Clark himself—a kindly person with a hint of the Doric amidst his 'Amurricanisms'—was always open to reason in the middle of the week, and we never heard that he had lost much by his 'accommodations.'

When we returned to the streets, the exodus from the theatres would be streaming towards cars and ferry. It was time we were on board again. Often there would be a crowd of us bound for the wharves. It was a custom to tramp through 'sailor-town' together. On the way we would cheer the 'crimps' up by a stave or two of 'Ye Mariners of England.'

X

THE DIFFICULTY WITH THE 'TORREADOR'S'

IN the half-deck differences, sometimes leading to fisticuffs, were of daily occurrence; but, considering that we were boys, drawn from all parts, each with his town or county's claim to urge, we dwelt very happily together. Though our barque was Scotch, we were only two strong, and at times it was very difficult to keep our end up, and impress our Southern shipmates with a proper sense of our national importance. The voice of reason was not always pacific, and on these occasions we could but do our best. Our Jones (of Yorkshire) was of a quarrelsome nature; most of our bickers were of his making, and to him our strained relations with the 'Torreador's' were mainly due.

The *Torreador* had berthed next to us at Mission Wharf, and by the unwritten laws of the sea and the customs of the port of San Francisco, her crew should have fraternised with us; from the mates (who could exchange views on the sizes of rope and the chances of promotion) down to the younger apprentices (who should have visited one another

to 'swap' ship's biscuit). With other ships matters might have been arranged, but the *Torreador* was a crack ship, and flew the blue ensign, even on week-days; her captain was an F.R.A.S., and her boys (whose parents paid heavy premiums for the glitter) wore brass buttons to every day work, and were rated as midshipmen, no less! The day after her arrival some of them were leaning over the rail looking at our barque, and acquaintance might have been made then and there, but Jones (who fancied himself a wit) spoiled the chances of an understanding by asking them if the stewardess had aired their socks properly that morning. Such a question aroused great indignation, and for over a fortnight we were 'low bounders,' and they 'kidglove sailors.'

Matters went ill between us, and our ships were too close together to ignore one another altogether. The '*Torreador's*' contented themselves with looking smarter and more aggressively clean than ever, and with casting supercilious glances all over us when they saw us chipping and scraping the rust off our vessel's topside—(they never got such jobs to do, as their Old Man was too busy cramming them up with "Sumners" and "Deviation Curves"). We replied by making stage asides to one another on the methods of 'coddling sickly sailors,' and Jones even went the length of

arraying himself in a huge paper collar when he was put over-side to paint ship. A brilliant idea, he thought it, until the Mate noticed him, and made his ears tingle till sundown.

The 'Torreador's' kept a gangway watch, and one of his duties seemed to be to cross the deck at intervals and inspect our barque, crew, and equipment in a lofty manner. He would even (if his Mate—the Chief Officer, they called him—wasn't looking) put his hands in his beackets and his tongue in his cheek. At first we greeted his appearance with exaggerated respect; we would stand to attention and salute him in style; but latterly, his frequent appearances (particularly as he always seemed to be there when our Mate was recounting our misdeeds, and explaining what lazy, loafing, ignorant, and 'sodgering' creatures he had to handle) got on our nerves.

Matters went on in this way for over a week, and everybody was getting tired of it; not only on our ship, for one day we caught a 'Torreador' openly admiring our collection of sharks' tails which we had nailed to the jib-boom. When he found himself observed he blushed and went about some business, before we had a chance to ask him aboard to see the sharks' backbones—fashioned into fearsome walking-sticks. Up-town we met them occasionally, but no one seemed

inclined to talk, and a 'barley' was as far away as ever. If we went to the Institute they were to be seen lolling all over the sofas in the billiard-room, smoking cigarettes, when, as everyone knows, a briar pipe is the only thing that goes decently with a brass-bound cap, tilted at the right angle. They did not seem to make many friends, and their talk among themselves was of matters that most apprentices ignore. One night Jones heard them rotting about 'Great Circle sailing,' and 'ice to the south'ard of the Horn,' and subjects like that, when, properly, they ought to be criticising their Old Man, and saying what an utter duffer of a Second Mate they had. Jones was wonderfully indignant at such talk, and couldn't sleep at night for thinking of all the fine sarcastic remarks he might have made, if he had thought of them at the time.

When our barque, by discharge of cargo, was risen in the water, we were put to send the royal-yards down on deck, and took it as a great relief from our unsailorly harbour jobs. The 'Torreador's,' with envious eyes, watched us reeving off the yard ropes. They had a Naval Reserve crew aboard to do these things, and their seamanship was mostly with a model mast in the half-deck. They followed all the operations with interest, and when Hansen and Eccles got the main royal-

yard on deck, in record time, they looked sorry that they weren't at the doing.

"Sumners" and "Deviation Curves" are all very well in their way, but a seamanlike job aloft, on a bright morning, is something stirring to begin the day with. A clear head to find one's way, and a sharp hand to unbend the gear and get the yard canted for lowering; then, with a glance at the fore (where fumlbers are in difficulties with their lifts), the prideful hail to the deck, "All clear, aloft! Lower away!"

No wonder the 'Torreador's' were not satisfied with their model mast!

Some days later we got another chance to show them how things were done aloft, and even if we were not so smart at it as we might have been, still it was a fairly creditable operation for some boys and a sailorman. Our main topgal'nmast was found to be 'sprung' at the heel, and one fine morning we turned-to to send the yard and mast down. This was rather a big job for us who had never handled but royal-yards before; but under the able instructions of the Mate and Bo'sun, we did our work without any serious digression from the standards of seamanship. The Mate wondered what was making us so uncommon smart and attentive, but when he caught sight of the 'Torreador's' watching our operations

with eager eyes, he understood, and even spurred us on by shouting, "*Mister!*" (the boys of the *Torreador* were thus addressed by their Officers) "*Mister Hansen, please lay out 'n the tops'l-yard, 'n unhook that bloody brace!*"

At dusk the 'Torreador's' had stiff necks with looking aloft so much, and when we knocked off, with the yard and mast on deck, and the gear stopped-up, they went below and hid their elaborate model mast under a bunk in the half-deck.

Soon after this a better feeling began. Eccles met one of the 'Torreador's' up-town, and an acquaintance was made. They spent the evening together, and he learned that the other chap came from near his place. [It was really about fifty miles from there, but what's a fifty miles when one is fourteen thousand miles from home?] The next evening two of them came across. "To see the ship," they said. They brought briar pipes with them, which was rather more than we could reasonably have expected. Thereafter nightly visits were the rule, and we became as thick as thieves. We took them to our bosom, and told them of many fresh ways to rob the store-room, though they had no need to go plundering, theirs being a well-found ship. We even went the length of elaborating a concerted and, as we afterwards

found, unworkable scheme to get even with a certain policeman who had caught our Munro a clip on the arm with his club when that youngster was singing "Rule Britannia" along the Water Front at half-past midnight. In the evenings our respective commanders could be seen leaning across their poop rails, engaged in genial conversation, addressing one another as "Captain" in the middle of each sentence with true nautical punctiliousness.

Once the 'Torreador's' Old Man seemed to be propounding his views on the training of apprentices with great earnestness. What he said we could not hear, but our Old Man replied that he had work enough "——to get the young 'sodgers' to learn to splice a rope, cross a royal-yard, and steer the ship decently, let alone the trouble of keeping them out of the store-room," and that he'd "—— nae doot but they'd learn navigation —— in guid time!"

The elder boys went picnicking on the Sundays to Cliff House or Sausalito; the second voyagers played team billiards together at the Institute, and proposed one another to sing at the impromptu concerts; while the young ones—those who had only been a dog-watch at sea—made themselves sick smoking black tobacco and talking 'ship-talk' in the half-deck.

Thus we fraternised in earnest, and when the *Torreador* left for Port Costa to load for home we bent our best ensign (though it was on a week-day), and cheered her out of the berth.

Next week a Norwegian barque took up her vacant place. She had come out from Swansea in ninety-eight days, and was an object of interest for a while. Soon, though, we grew tired of the daily hammering of 'stock-fish' before breakfast, and the sight of her Mate starting the windmill pump when the afternoon breeze came away. We longed for the time when we, too, would tow up to Port Costa, for we had a little matter of a race for ship's gigs to settle with the '*Torreador's*' and were only waiting for our Captains to take it up and put silk hats on the issue.

XI

THE 'CONVALESCENT'

WELSH JOHN was discharged from hospital at ten on a Sunday morning; before dark he was locked up, charged with riotous behaviour and the assaulting of one Hans Maartens, a Water Front saloon keeper. A matter of strong drink, a weak head, and a maudlin argument, we thought; but Hansen saw the hand of the 'crimps' in the affair, and when we heard that sailormen were scarce (no ships having arrived within a fortnight), we felt sure that they were counting on John's blood-money from an outward-bound New Yorker.

"Ye see, John hadn't money enough t' get drunk on," he said. "We saw him in hospital last Sunday, an' Munro gave him a 'half' to pay his cars down t' th' ship when he came out. Half-dollars don't go far in 'sailor-town.' I guess these sharks have bin primin' him up t' get 'm shipped down th' Bay. The *J. B. Grace* has been lyin' at anchor off The Presidio, with her 'Blue Peter' up this last week or more, an' nobody 's allowed aboard 'r ashore but Daly an' his gang. Maartens is in with 'em, an' the whole thing 's a plant to

shanghai John. Drunk or no' drunk, John's seen th' game, an' plugged th' Dutchman for a start."

As it was on Munro's account that he had come by the injuries that put him in hospital, we felt more than a passing interest in John's case, and decided to get him clear of the 'crimps' if we could. We knew he would be fined, for saloon-keepers and boarding-masters are persons of weight and influence in 'Frisco town, and, although John had nearly eight months' pay due to him, it would be considered a weakness, a sort of confession of Jack's importance, for the Captain to disburse on his account. It being the beginning of a week, we could only muster a few dollars among us, so we applied to James Peden, a man of substance on the Front, for assistance and advice.

James was from Dundee. After a varied career as seaman, whaleman, boarding-house keeper, gold seeker, gravedigger, and beach-comber, he had taken to decent ways and now acted as head-foreman to a firm of stevedores. He was an office-bearer of the local Scottish Society, talked braid Scots on occasions (though his command of Yankee slang when stimulating his men in the holds was finely complete), and wore a tartan neck-tie that might aptly be called a gathering of the clans.

To James we stated our case when he came aboard to see that his 'boy-ees made things hum.'

It was rather a delicate matter to do this properly, as we had to leave it to inference that James's knowledge of these matters was that of a reputable foreman stevedore, and not that of a quondam boarding-master whose exploits in the 'crimping' business were occasionally referred to when men talked, with a half-laugh, of shady doings. It was nicely done, though, and James, recalling a parallel case that occurred to a man, "whom he knew," was pessimistic.

"Weel, lauds, Ah guess Joan Welsh 'r Welsh Joan 'll be ootward bound afore the morn's nicht. They'll pit 'm up afore Judge Kelly, a bluidy Fenian, wha'll gie 'm 'ten dollars or fourteen days' fur bein' a British sailorman alane. Pluggin' a Dutchman's naethin'; it's th' 'Rid Rag' that Kelly's doon oan. Ah ken the swine; he touched me twinty dollars fur gie'n a winchman a clout i' the lug—an ill-faured Dago wi' a haun' on 's knife. Ah guess there's nae chance for a lime-juicer up-bye, an' ye may take it that yer man 'll be fined. Noo, withoot sayin' ony mair aboot it, ye ken fine that yer Captain 's no' gaun tae pey't. Wi' nae sicht o' a charter an' th' chances o' 's ship bein' laid bye fur a whilie, he'll no' be wantin' mair men aboard, 'n Ahm thinkin' he'll no' be sorry tae see th' last o' this Joan Welsh. This is whaur Daly 'll come in. He'll offer t' pey th'

fine, an' yer man, wi' seeven weeks' hospital ahint 'm, an' the prospeck o' a fortnicht's jile afore 'm, 'll jump at th' chance o' a spree. Daly 'll pey th' fine, gae yer man a nicht's rope fur a maddenin' drunk, an' ship 'm on th' New-Yorker i' th' mornin'. There's nae help for't; that's th' wey they dae things oot here; unless maybe ye'd pey th' fine yersels?"

This was our opportunity, and Munro asked for a loan till next week. He explained the state of our purses and the uselessness of applying to the Captain so early in the week; James was dubious. Munro urged the case in homely Doric; James, though pleased to hear the old tongue, was still hesitating when Munro skilfully put a word of the Gaelic here and there. A master move! James was highly flattered at our thinking he had the Gaelic (though never a word he knew), and when Munro brought a torrent of liquid vowels into the appeal, James was undone. The blood of the Standard Bearer of the Honourable Order of the Scottish Clans coursed proudly through his veins, and, readjusting his tartan neck-tie, he parted with fifteen dollars on account.

Now a difficulty arose. It being a working day, none of us would get away to attend the Court. We thought of Old Martin, the night watchman. As he slept soundly during three-fifths of his

night watch, it was no hardship for the old 'shell-back' to turn out, but he wasn't in the best of tempers when we wakened him and asked his assistance.

"Yew boys thinks nuthin' ov roustin' a man out, as 'as bin on watch awl night." (Martin was stretched out like a jib downhaul, sound asleep on the galley floor, when we had come aboard on Sunday night.) "Thinks nuthin' at awl ov callin' a man w'en ye ain't got no damn business to. . . . W'en Ah was a boy, it was ropesendin' for scratchin' a match in fo'cas'le, 'n hell's-hidin' fer speakin' in a Dago's whisper!" —Martin sullenly stretched out for his pipe, ever his first move on waking—"Nowadays boys is men an' men 's old — W'y"—Martin waved his little black pipe accusingly—"taint only t' other day w'en that there Jones lays out 'n th' tawps'l yardarm afore *me* 'n mittens th' bloody earin' 's if awl th' sailormen wos dead!" His indignation was great, his growls long and deep, but at last he consented to do our errand—"tho' ain't got no use for that damned Welshman me-self!"

Arrayed in his pilot cloth suit, with a sailorlike felt hat perched rakish on his hard old head, old Martin set out with our fifteen dollars in his pocket, and his instructions, to pay John's fine and

steer clear of the 'crimps.' We had misgivings as to the staunchness of our messenger, but we had no other, and it was with some slight relief that we watched him pass the nearest saloon with only a wave of his arm to the bar-keeper and tramp sturdily up the street towards the City.

At dinner-time neither John nor Old Martin had rejoined the ship. We thought, with misgiving, that a man with fifteen dollars in his becket would be little likely to remember the miserly meal provided by the ship, and even Browne (the Mark Tapley of our half-deck) said he shouldn't be surprised if the 'crimps' had got both John and Old Martin (to say nothing of our fifteen dollars). As the day wore on we grew anxious, but at last we got news of the absentees when Peden passed, on his way out to the Bay. The sentimental Scotsman of the morning had thought a lot after his liberal response to Munro's appeal, and had called round at the Police Court to see that the affair was genuine. He was now in his right senses; a man of rock, not to be moved even by a mention of Burns's 'Hielan' Mary,' his tartan tie had slipped nearly out of sight beneath the collar of his coat, and the hard, metallic twang of his voice would have exalted a right 'down-easter.'

"Yewr man was 'up' w'en Ah got raound," he said, "up before Kelly, 's Ah reckoned. Ah

didn't hear the chyarge, but thyar was th' Dutchman with 's head awl bandaged up—faked up, Ah guess. Th' Jedge ses t' th' prisoner, 'Did yew strike this man?' Yewr man answers, 'Inteed to goodness, yer 'anner, he looks 's if somebody 'd struck 'm!' Wi' that a laugh wint raound, an' yewr man tells 's story." (James's Doric was returning to him, and the twang of his "u's" became less pronounced.) "He had bin in hospital, he said, wasn't very strong—here th' Dutchman looks up, wonderin' like—had ta'en a drap o' drink wi' a man he met in 'sailor-town.' There wis talk aboot a joab ashore, an' they were in Mertin's tae see aboot it, an' yer man sees this Mertin pit somethin' i' th' drink. He didna like the looks o't, he said, so he ups an' gies Mertin yin on th' heid wi' a 'schooner' gless. That wis a' he kent aboot it, an' th' Dutchman begood his yarn. Oot o' his kind-hertedness, he'd gie'n th' pris'ner a gless or twa, fower at th' maist, when th' thankless villain ups an' ca's 'm names an' belts 'm on th' heid wi' a gless. 'Pit drugs i' th' drink?' Naethin' o' th' kind! He wis jist takin' a fly oot o't wi' the haunle o' a spune.

"A bad business, says Kelly, a bad business! There's faur too miny av thim British sailormin makin' trouble on th' Front. It's tin dallars, says he, tin dallars 'r fourteen days!

“Ah saw Daly git up frae th’ sate an’ he his a long confab wi’ yer man, but just then yer auld watchman tramps in, an’ efter speirin’ aboot he ups an’ peys th’ fine, an’ they let yer man oot. Ah seen th’ twa o’ them gang aff wi’ Daly, an’ Ah couldna verra weel ha’e onythin’ tae dae wi’ them when he wis bye.”

This was James’s news; he was not surprised to learn that they had not returned to the ship, and, as he passed on, on his way to the jetty steps, muttered, “Weel, it’s a gey peety they had that five dollars ower much, for Ah doot they’ll baith be under th’ ‘Blue Peter’ before th’ morn’s mornin’.”

When we knocked off for the day we were soon ashore looking for the wanderers, and early found plain evidence that they had been celebrating John’s ‘convalescence’ and release. An Italian orange-seller whom we met had distinct memory of two seafaring gentlemen purchasing oranges and playing ‘bowls’ with them in the gutter of a busy street; a Jewish outfitter and his assistants were working well into the night, rearranging oilskins and sea-boots on the ceiling of a disordered shop, and a Scandinavian dame, a vendor of peanuts, had a tale of strange bargainings to tell.

Unable to find them, we returned to the ship. One of us had to keep Martin’s watch, and the Mate was already on the track of the affair with

threatenings of punishment for the absent watchman.

About ten we heard a commotion on the dock side, and looked over to see the wanderers, accompanied by all the 'larrikins' of 'sailor-town,' making for the ship. Two policemen in the near background were there to see that no deliberate breach-of-the-peace took place.

Martin, hard-headed Old Martin, who stood drink better than the Welshman, was singing '*Bound away to the West'ard in th' Dreadnought we go*' in the pipingest of trebles, and Welsh John, hardly able to stand, was defying the Dutch, backed by numberless Judge Kellys, and inviting them to step up, take off their jackets and come on.

XII

ON THE SACRAMENTO

AFTER our cargo was discharged we left Mission Wharf for an anchorage in the Bay, and there—swinging flood and ebb—we lay in idleness. There were many ships in the anchorage, and many more laid up at Martinez and Sausalito, for the year's crop was not yet to hand, and Masters were hanging back for a rise in freights. There we lay, idle ships, while the summer sun ripened the crops and reared the golden grain for the harvest—the harvest that we waited to carry round the roaring Horn to Europe. Daily we rowed the Old Man ashore, and when he returned from the Agent's office, we could tell by the way he took a request (say, for a small advance “to buy a knife”) that our ship was still unchartered, and likely to be so for some time.

To a convenient wharf the gigs of each ship came every morning, and from then to untold hours of the night the jetty steps were well worn by comings and goings. Some of the Captains (the man-driving ones, who owed no man a moment) used to send their boats back to the ship as soon as they landed, but a number kept theirs at the wharf

in case messages had to be sent off. We usually hung around at the jetty, where there were fine wooden piles that we could carve our barque's name on when our knives were sharp enough. With the boats' crews from other ships we could exchange news and opinions, and quarrel over points in seamanship.

Those amongst us who had often voyaged to 'Frisco, and others who had been long in the port, were looked upon as 'oracles,' and treated with considerable respect. The *Manydown* had been sixteen months in 'Frisco, and her boys could easily have passed muster as Americans. They chewed sweet tobacco ("malassus kyake," they called it), and swore Spanish oaths with freedom and abandon. Their gig was by far the finest and smartest at the jetty, and woe betide the unwitting 'bow' who touched her glossy varnished side with his boathook. For him a wet swab was kept in readiness, and their stroke, a burly ruffian, was always willing to attend to the little affair if it went any farther. Our Captains came down in batches, as a rule, and there would be great clatter of oars and shipping of rowlocks as their boats hauled alongside to take them off. Rivalry was keen, and many were the gallant races out to the anchorage, with perhaps a little sum at stake just for the honour of the ship.

We had about a month of this, and it was daily becoming more difficult to find a decently clear space on the piles on which to carve '*Florence*, of Glasgow.' One day the Old Man returned at an unusual hour, and it was early evident that something was afoot; he was too preoccupied to curse Hansen properly for being away from the boat on business of his own, and, instead of criticising our stroke and telling us what rotten rowers we were, as was his wont, he busied himself with letters and papers. We put off to the ship in haste, and soon the news went round that we were going up-river to Port Costa, to load for home. Old Joe Niven was the medium through whom all news filtered from the cabin, and from him we had the particulars even down to the amount of the freight. We felt galled that a German barque, which had gone up a week before, was getting two and twopence-ha'penny more; but we took consolation in the thought of what a fine crow we would have over the '*Torreador's*,' who were only loading at forty-five and sixpence, direct to Hull.

On board we only mustered hands enough to do the ordinary harbour work, and raising the heavy anchors was a task beyond us; so at daybreak next morning we rowed round the ships to collect a crew. The other Captains had promised our

Old Man a hand, here and there, and when we pulled back we had men enough, lusty and willing, to kedge her up a hill.

There was mist on the water when we started to 'clear hawse'—the thick, clammy mist that comes before a warm day. About us bells clattered on the ships at anchor, and steamers went slowly by with a hiss of waste steam that told of a ready hand on the levers. Overhead, the sky was bright with the promise of a glorious day, but with no mind to lift the pall from the water, it looked ill for a ready passage. We had four turns of a foul hawse to clear (the track of a week's calms), and our windlass was of a very ancient type, but our scratch crew worked well and handy, and we were ready for the road when the screw tug *Escort* laid alongside and lashed herself up to our quarter. They tow that way on the Pacific Coast—the wily ones know the advantage of having a ship's length in front of them to brush away the 'snags.'

A light breeze took the mist 'way down under,' and we broke the weather anchor out with the rousing chorus of an old sea song:

Old Storm-along, he's dead a-an' gone,

(*To my way-ay, Storm-along;*)

O-old Storm-along, he's dead a-an' gone,

(*Aye! Aye! Aye! Mister Storm-along.*)

Some friends of the Captain had boarded us from the tug, eager for the novelty of a trip upriver in a real Cape Horner. One elderly lady was so charmed by our 'chantey,' that she wanted the Captain to make us sing it over again. She wondered when he told her that that was one thing he could not do. With the rare and privileged sight of frocks on the poop, there was a lot of talk about who should go to the wheel. Jones worked himself into it, and laid aft in a clean rig when the Old Man called for a hand to the wheel. There he made the most of it, and hung gracefully over the spokes with his wrists turned out to show the tattoo marks.

The skipper of the tug came aboard our ship to pilot us up the river, and he directed the movements of his own vessel from our poop deck. We passed under the guns of rocky Alcatraz, and stood over to the wooded slopes and vineyards of Sausalito, where many 'laid-up' ships were lying at the buoys, with upper yards down and huge ballast booms lashed alongside. Here we turned sharply to the norrard and bore up the broad bosom of Sacramento—the river that sailormen make songs about, the river that flows over a golden bed. Dull, muddy water flowing swiftly seawards; straight rip in the channel, and a race where the high banks are; a race that the Greek fisher-

men show holy pictures to, when the springs are flowing!

With us, the tide was light enough, and our Pilot twisted her about with the skill and non-chalance of a master hand. One of our passengers, a young lady who had enthused over everything, from the shark's tail on the spanker-boom end ("Waal—I never!") to the curl of the bo'sun's whiskers ("Jest real sweet!"), seemed greatly interested at the frequent orders to the steersman.

"Sa-ay, Pilot!" she said, "I guess you must know every rock about here?"

"Wa-al, no, Miss, I can't say 's I do," answered Palinurus; "but I reckon to know where th' deep wa-r-r is!"

As we approached the shallows at the head of San Pablo Bay, the Old Man expressed an opinion as to the lack of water, and the Pilot again provided a jest for the moment.

"Oh, that's awl right, Cap.; she's only drawin' twelve feet, 'n I kin tak' 'r over a damp meadow 'n this trim!"

We met a big stern-wheel ferry bound down from Benicia with a load of freight wagons. She looked like an important junction adrift. Afterwards we saw a full-rigged ship towing down, and when near we made her out to be the *Torreador*,

ready for sea. This was a great disappointment to us, for we had looked forward to being with her at Port Costa. Now, our long-dreamt-of boat-race was off (with our boat's crew in first-class trim, too!), and amid the cheering as we met and passed on, we heard a shrill and unmistakable '*cock-a-doodle-doo!*' which we remembered with indignation for many a day. Tall and stately she looked, with her flags a-peak and everything in trim: yards all aloft, and squared to an inch, and her sails rolled up without crease like the dummy covers on the booms of a King's yacht. A gallant ship, and a credit to the flag she flew.

We passed many floating tree trunks and branches in the river. The snows had come away from the Sierras, and there was spate on Sacramento. We rode over one of the 'snags' with a shudder, and all our jack-easy Pilot said was, "Guess that'll take some 'f the barnacles off 'r battum, bettr'r a week's sojerin' with the patent scrubber!" All the same he took very good care that his own craft rode free of obstruction.

Rounding a bend, we came in sight of our rendezvous, but Port Costa showed little promise from the water-side, though the sight of our old friends, the *Crocodile*, the *Peleus*, and the *Drumeltan*, moored at the wharf cheered us. Two or three large mills, with a cluster of white houses

about, composed the township; a large raft-like ferry which carried the 'Frisco mail trains bodily across the river contributed to its importance, but there was nothing else about the place to excite the remark of even an idle 'prentice boy.

A little way up-stream, was a town, indeed; a town of happy memories. Benicia, with its vineyards and fruit gardens, and the low, old houses, alone perhaps in all California to tell of Spain's dominion. A town of hearty, hospitable folk, unaffected by the hustle of larger cities; a people of peace and patience, the patience of tillers of the vine.

Off Martinez, where the river is wide, we canted ship, and worked back to Port Costa against the tide. We made fast at the ballast wharf, and our borrowed crew, having completed their job, laid aft to receive the Captain's blessing, and a silver dollar or two to put in their pockets. Then they boarded the tug, and were soon on their way back to 'Frisco.

When Jones came from the wheel, he had great tales to tell of the attentions the ladies had paid him. He plainly wished us to understand that he'd made an impression, but we knew that was not the way of it, for Old Niven had told Eccles that the pretty one was engaged to be married to the ship's butcher, down in 'Frisco, a fairy Dutchman of about fifteen stone six.

XIII

HOMEWARD

IN a Sunday morning, while Benicia's bells were chiming for early Mass, we cast off from the wharf at Port Costa and towed down Sacramento. Though loaded and in sea trim, we were still short of a proper crew, so we brought up in 'Frisco Bay to complete our complement.

Days passed and the boarding-masters could give us no more than two 'rancheros' (who had once seen the sea from Sonoma Heights), and a young coloured man, a sort of a seaman, who had just been discharged from Oakland Jail. The Old Man paid daily visits to the Consul, who could do nothing—there were no men. He went to the boarding-houses, and had to put up with coarse familiarity, to drink beer with the scum of all nations, to clap scoundrels on the back and tell them what sly dogs they were. It was all of no use. The 'crimps' were crippled—there were no men.

"Wa-al, Cap.," Daly would say to the Old Man's complaint, "what kin we do? I guess we can't make men, same's your bo'sin 'ud make

spunyarn. . . . Ain't bin a darned soul in this haouse fer weeks as cud tell a clew from a crojeck. Th' ships is hangin' on ter ther men like ole blue! Captens is a-given' em chickens an' soft-tack, be gosh, an' dollars fer 'a drunk' on Sundays. . . . When they turns 'em to, it's, 'Naow, lads, me boys! When you're ready, me sons!' . . . A month a-gone it was, 'Out, ye swine! Turn aout, damn ye, an' get a move on!' . . . Ah, times is bad, Cap.; times is damn bad! I ain't fingered an advance note since th' *Dharwar* sailed—a fortnight ago! Hard times, I guess, an' we can't club 'em aboard, same's we use ter!"

A hopeless quest, indeed, looking for sailormen ashore; but ships were expected, and when the wind was in the West the Old Man would be up on deck at daybreak, peering out towards the Golden Gate, longing for the glad sight of an inward bounder, that would bring the sorely needed sailors in from the sea.

A week passed, a week of fine weather, with two days of a rattling nor'west wind that would have sent us on our way, free of the land, with a smother of foam under the bows. All lost to us, for no ships came in, and we lay at anchor, swinging ebb and flood—a useless hull and fabric, without a crew to spread the canvas and swing the great yards!

Every morning the Mate would put the windlass in gear and set everything in readiness for breaking out the anchor; but when we saw no tug putting off, and no harbour cat-boats tacking out from the shore with sailors' bags piled in the bows, he would undo the morning's work and put us to 'stand-by' jobs on the rigging. There were other loaded ships in as bad a plight as we. The *Drumeltan* was eight hands short of her crew of twenty-six, and the Captain of the *Peleus* was considering the risk of setting off for the Horn, short-handed by three. Sailors' wages were up to thirty and thirty-five dollars a month, and at that (nearly the wage of a Chief Mate of a 'limejuicer') there were no proper able seamen coming forward. Even the 'hoboes' and ne'er-do-weels, who usually flock at 'Frisco on the chance of getting a ship's passage out of the country, seemed to be lying low.

One evening the ship *Blackadder* came in from sea. She was from the Colonies; had made a long passage, and was spoken of as an extra 'hungry' ship—and her crew were in a proper spirit of discontent. She anchored near us, and the Old Man gazed longingly at the fine stout colonials who manned her. He watched the cat-boats putting off from the shore, and smiled at the futile attempts of the ship's Captain and Mates to keep the 'crimps' from boarding. If one was

checked at the gangway, two clambered aboard by the head, and the game went merrily on.

"Where's she from, Mister?" said the Old Man to the Mate who stood with him. "Did ye hear?"

"Newcastle, New South Wales, I heard," said Mr. Hollins. "Sixty-five days out, the butcher said; him that came off with the stores this morning."

"Sixty-five, eh! Thirty o' that for a 'dead horse,' an' there'll be about six pound due the men; a matter o' four or five pound wi' slop chest an' that! They'll not stop, Mister, damn the one o' them' . . . Ah, there they go; there they go!" Sailors' bags were being loaded into the cat-boats. It was the case of:

*The grub was bad, an' th' wages low,
An' it's time—for us—t' leave 'r!*

"Good business for us, anyway," said the Old Man, and told the Mate to get his windlass ready for 'heaving up' in the morning.

Alas! he left the other eager shipmasters out of his count. The Captain of the *Drumeltan* raised the 'blood-money' to an unheard-of sum, and two days later towed out to sea, though the wind was W.S.W. beyond the Straits—a 'dead muzzler'!

A big American ship—the *J. B. Flint*—was one of the fleet of 'waiters.' She was for China.

'Bully' Nathan was Captain of her (a man who would have made the starkest of pirates, if he had lived in pirate times), and many stories of his and his Mates' brutality were current at the Front. No seaman would sign in the *Flint* if he had the choice; but the choice lay with the boarding-master when 'Bully' Nathan put up the price.

"Give me gravediggers or organ-grinders, boys, if ye can't get sailormen," he was reported to have said. "Anything with two hands an' feet. I guess I'm Jan—K.—Nathan, and they'll be sailormen or 'stiffs' before we reach aout!" No one knew where she got a crew, but while the Britishers were waiting semi-lawful service, Jan K. slipped out through the night, getting the boarding-house runners to set sail for him before they left the *Flint* with her crew of drugged long-shoremen. At the end of the week we got three more men. Grainger, a Liverpool man, who had been working in the Union Ironworks, and, "sick o' th' beach," as he put it, wanted to get back to sea again. Pat Hogan, a merry-faced Irishman, who signed as cook (much to the joy of Houston, who had been the 'food spoiler' since McEwan cleared). The third was a lad, Cutler, a runaway apprentice, who had been working ashore since his ship had sailed. It was said that he had been 'conducting' a tramcar to his own immediate

profit and was anxious. We were still six hands short, but, on the morning after a Yankee clipper came in from New York, we towed out—with three prostrate figures lying huddled among the raffle in the fo'cas'le.

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We raised the anchor about midnight and dawn found us creeping through the Golden Gate in the wake of a panting tug. There was nothing to see, for the morning mist was over the Straits, and we had no parting view of the harbour. The siren on Benita Point roared a raucous warning as we felt our way past the Head; and that, for us, was the last of the land.

When we reached the schooner and discharged our Pilot, it was still a 'clock calm,' and there was nothing for it but to tow for an offing, while we put the canvas on her in readiness for a breeze.

At setting sail we were hard wrought, for we were still three hands short of our complement, and the three in the fo'cas'le were beyond hope by reason of drug and drink. The blocks and gear were stiff after the long spell in harbour. Some of the new men were poor stuff. The Mexican 'rancheros' were the worst; one was already sea-sick, and the other had a look of despair. They followed the 'crowd' about and made some show of pulling on the tail of the halyards, but they were very

green, and it was easy to work off an old sailor's trick on them—'lighting up the slack' of the rope, thus landing them on the broad of their backs when they pulled—at nothing! We should have had pity for them, for they never even pretended to be seamen; but we were shorthanded in a heavy ship, and the more our arms ached, the louder grew our curses at their clumsy 'sodgerin'.

One of the three in the fo'cas'le 'came to' and staggered out on deck to see where he was. As he gazed about, dazed and bewildered, the Mate, seeing him, shouted.

"Here, you! What's yer name?"

The man passed his hand over his eyes and said, "Hans."

"Well, Hans, you git along to the tops'l hal-yards; damn smart's th' word!"

With hands to his aching head, the man staggered drunkenly. Everything was confusion to him. Where was he? What ship? What voyage? The last he remembered would be setting the tune to a Dago fiddler in a gaudy saloon, with lashings of drink to keep his feet a-tripping. Now all was mixed and hazy, but in the mist one thing stood definite, a seamanlike order: "Top'sl hal-yards! Damn smart!" Hans laid aft and tallied on with the crowd.

Here was a man who had been outrageously

used. Drugged — robbed — ‘shanghai-ed’! His head splitting with the foul drink, knowing nothing and no one; but he had heard a seamanlike order, so he hauled on the rope, and only muttered something about his last ship having a crab-winch for the topsail halyards!

About noon we cast off the tug, but there was yet no wind to fill our canvas, and we lay as she had left us long after her smoke had vanished from the misty horizon.

At one we were sent below for our first sea-meal, Over our beef and potatoes we discussed our new shipmates and agreed that they were a weedy lot for a long voyage. In this our view was held by the better men in the fo’cas’le and, after dinner, the crew came aft in a body, headed by Old Martin, who said “as ’ow they wanted t’ speak t’ th’ Captin!”

The Old Man was evidently prepared for a ‘growl’ from forward, and took a conciliatory stand.

“Well, men? What’s the trouble? What have you to say?” he said.

Old Martin took the lead with assurance.

“I speaks for all ’ans, Captin,” he said. . . . “An’ we says as ’ow this ’ere barque is short-anded; we says as ’ow there’s three empty bunks in th’ fo’cas’le; an’ two of th’ ’ans wot’s shipped

ain't never bin aloft afore. We says as 'ow—with all doo respeck, Captain—we wants yer t' put back t' port for a crew wot can take th' bloomin' packet round the 'Orn, Sir!"

Martin stepped back, having fired his shot, and he carefully arranged a position among his mates, so that he was neither in front of the 'men' nor behind, where Houston and the cook and the 'rancheros' stood.

The Old Man leaned over the poop-rail and looked at the men collectively, with great admiration. He singled out no man for particular regard, but just admired them all, as one looks at soldiers on parade. He moved across the poop to see them at a side angle; the hands became hotly uncomfortable.

"What's this I hear, men? What's this I hear?"

("As fine a crowd o' men as ever I shipped, Mister," a very audible aside to the Mate.) "What's this I hear? D'ye mean t' tell me that ye're afraid t' be homeward bound in a well-found ship, just because we're three hands short of a big 'crowd'?"

"Wot 'bout them wot ain't never been aloft afore," muttered Martin, though in a somewhat subdued voice.

"What about them?" said the Old Man.

"What about them? Why, a month in fo'-cas'le alongside such fine seamen as I see before me" (here he singled out Welsh John and some of the old hands for a pleasant smile), "alongside men that know their work." (Welsh John and the others straightened themselves up and looked away to the horizon, as if the outcome of the affair were a matter of utter indifference to them.) "D'ye tell me a month alongside men that have sailed with me before won't make sailors of them, eh? *Tchutt*, I know different. . . . Sailors they'll be before we reach the Horn." (Here one of the potential 'sailors' ran to the ship's side, intent on an affair of his own.)

The men turned to one another, sheepish.

"Ye know well enough we can't get men, even if we did put back to port," continued the Old Man. "They're no' t' be had! Ye'll have to do yer best, and I'll see" (a sly wink to the Mate) "that ye ain't put on. Steward!"

He gave an order that brought a grin of expectation to the faces of all "'ans,' and the affair ended.

A wily one was our Old Jock!

The Mate was indignant at so much talk. . . . "A 'clip' under the ear for that Martin," he said, "would have settled it without all that palaver"; and then he went on to tell the Old Man what happened when he was in the New Bedford whalers.

"Aye, aye, man! Aye, aye," said Old Jock, "I know the Yankee game, Mister—blood an' thunder an' belayin' pins an' six-ounce knuckle-dusters! Gun play, too, an' all the rest of it. I know that game, Mister, and it doesn't come off on *my* ship—no' till a' else has been tried."

He took a turn or two up and down the poop, whistling for a breeze. Out in the nor'-west the haze was lifting, and a faint grey line of ruffled water showed beyond the glassy surface of our encircling calm.

"Stan' by t' check th' yards, Mister," he shouted, rubbing his hands. . . . "Phe . . . w! Phe . . . w! Phe . . . w! encouraging."

XIV

A TRICK AT THE WHEEL

“KEEP ’r full an’ by!”
“Full ’n by!”

Houston, relieved from the wheel, reports to the Mate and goes forward, and I am left to stand my trick.

We are in the south-east trades; a gentle breeze, and all sail set. Aloft, the ghostly canvas stands out against a star-studded sky, and the masthead trucks sway in a stately circle as we heave on the light swell. She is steering easily, asking nothing but a spoke or two when a fluttering tremor on the weather leach of the royals shows that she is nearing the wind. The light in the binnacle is dim and spluttering, the glass smoke-blackened, and one can but see the points on the compass card. South sou’-west, she heads, swinging a little west at times, but making a good course. Eccles, who should see to the lights, is stretched out on the wheel-box grating, resuming the thread of his slumbers; a muttered “’ware!” will bring him to his feet when the Mate comes round; meantime, there are stars ahead to steer by, and the binnacle-lamp may wait.

South of the Line, at four in the morning, is a fine time to see the stars, if one be but properly awake. Overhead, Orion has reached his height, and is now striding towards the western horizon. The Dog-star is high over the mizzen truck, and Canopus, clear of the weather backstays, is a friend to a drowsy helmsman. The Southern Cross is clearing the sea-line, and above it many-eyed Argus keeps watch over the Pole. Old friends, all of them, companions of many a night watch on leagues of lonely sea. A glow to the eastward marks where the dawn will break, and the fleecy trade-clouds about the horizon are already assuming shape and colour. There the stars are paling, but a planet, Jupiter, perhaps, stands out in brilliance on the fast lightening sky.

Forward one bell is struck, and the look-out chants a long-drawn, "Aw—ll's well!"

The Mate, who until now has been leaning lazily over the poop rail, comes aft, yawning wholeheartedly, as men do at sea. He peers into the dimly-lighted binnacle, turns his gaze to the sail aloft, sniffs the wind, and fixes me with a stern though drowsy eye.

"H-mm! You, is it?" (I have but a modest reputation as a steersman.) "Jest you keep 'r full now, or I'll teach ye steerin' in your watch below. Keep 'r full, an' no damned shinnanikin!" He goes forward.

‘Shinnanikin’ is a sailor word; it means anything at all; it may be made an adjective or a verb or almost any part of speech, to serve a purpose or express a thought. Here it meant that there was to be no fooling at the helm, that she was to be steered as by Gunter himself. “Full an’ by,” was the word. “Full an’ by, an’ no damned shinnanikin!” Right!

The light grows, and the towering mass of canvas and cordage shows faint shadows here and there. The chickens in the quarter coops stir and cackle; a cock crows valiantly. Eccles, sleeping his watch on the lee side of the poop, stirs uneasily, finds a need for movement, and tramps irresolutely up and down his appointed station. From somewhere out of sight the Mate shouts an order, and he goes forward to take in the sidelights; dim and sickly they shine as he lifts them inboard.

There is now some sign of life about the decks. A keen smell of burning wood and a glare from the galley show that the cook has taken up the day’s duties. Some men of the watch are already gathered about the door waiting for their morning coffee, and the ‘idlers’ (as the word is at sea), the steward, carpenter, and sailmaker, in various states of attire, are getting ready for their work.

Two bells marks five o’clock, and the crowd about the galley door grows impatient. The cook

has a difficulty with his fire, and is behind time.

"Come on, 'doctor'!" shouts Old Martin; "get a move on yer! Them tawps'l 'alyards is screech-in' fer a pull, an' th' Mate's got 'is heagle heye on that 'ere fore-tack. 'E'll be a-floggin' th' clock afore ye knows it!"

The Mate hears this, as Martin intended he should, and scowls darkly at that ancient mariner. Martin will have his 'old iron' worked up for that before the watch is out. He's a hard case. Coffee is served out, and the crowd disperses. It is now broad daylight, and the sun is on the horizon. The east is a-fire with his radiance; purest gold there changing to saffron and rose overhead; and in the west, where fading stars show, copper-hued clouds are working down to the horizon in track of the night. Our dingy sails are cut out in seemly curves and glowing colours against the deep of the sky; red-gold where the light strikes, and deepest violet in the shadows. Blue smoke from the galley funnel is wafted aft by the draught from the sails, and gives a kindly scent to the air; there is no smell like that of wood fires in the pride of the morning. This is a time to be awake and alive; a morning to be at the wheel of a leaning ship.

Presently I am relieved for a few minutes that I may have my coffee. Being the last man, I

get a bo'sun's share of the grounds. To my protests the cook gives scant heed.

"Ach, sure! Phwat are yez growlin' at? Sure, if ye'd been in my last ship, yez wouldn't have none at all! Devil the coffee would yez get till eight bells ov a marnin', an' tay at thatt, bedad!"

The 'doctor,' being Irish, is beyond argument, so I take my pannikin along to our quarters to sift the grounds as best I can. There is naught but dry ship's biscuit to put down with it, for it is well on in the week—Thursday, indeed—and only Hansen among us can make his week's rations last out beyond that; he was bred in the north. The half-deck is in its usual hopeless disorder—stuffy and close and dismal in the shuttered half-light. Four small ports give little air, and sea clothes hanging everywhere crowd up the space, The beams, blackened by tobacco smoke, are hacked and carved, covered by the initials and remarks of bygone apprentices. Only the after one is kept clear; there the Board of Trade inscription (slightly altered by some perspiring genius), reads, "Certified to suffocate eight seamen." A dismal hole on a bright morning! Happily, one has not far to go for a breath of keen air. Ten minutes is my time, and I am back at the wheel again.

The Mate is seated on the cabin skylight, smok-

ing. This is his time to consider the trim of the sails. It is no matter that the evening before the gear was sweated up to the tautest of sailing trim; the wind is unchanged, but morning shows wrinkles in the clew of the royals or a sag in the foot of a topsail. Ropes give mysteriously, and this must all be righted before the Old Man comes on deck. So he smokes leisurely and considers the trim.

The day's work begins at half-past five. The Mate strikes three bells himself, exact, on the tick of the minute, and goes forward to turn the men to.

"Fore tack," as Martin said, is the first order. The Mate signs to me to luff her up, and when the sail shakes the tack is hove hard down. Then sheets and halyards are sweated up, ropes coiled, and a boy sent aloft to stop up the gear. At the main they have the usual morning wrestle with the weather topsail sheet—a clew that never did fit. Macallison's loft must have been at sixes and sevens the day they turned that sail out; a Monday after Glasgow Fair, belike. When the trim is right, wash deck begins. A bucket and spar is rigged, and the clear sparkling water is drawn from overside. This is the fine job of the morning watch in summer seas. The sound of cool sluicing water and the swish of scrubbing brooms

is an invitation that no one can resist. There is something in it that calls for bare feet and trousers rolled above the knee. There is grace in the steady throwing of the water—the brimming bucket poised for the throw, left foot cocked a few inches above the deck, the balance, and the sweeping half-circle with the limpid water pouring strongly and evenly over the planking; then the recovery, and the quick half-turn to pass the empty bucket and receive a full—a figure for a stately dance!

Now it is six, and I strike four bells. Martin has the next trick, but I see no signs of my relief. The Mate will have him at some lowly 'work-up' job, cleaning pig-pens or something like that, for his hint about flogging the clock in the morning. The cranky old 'shellback' is always 'asking for it.'

In the waist a row begins, a bicker between the sailmaker and bo'sun. Old Dutchy is laying it off because someone has spilt water on the main-hatch, where a sail is spread out, ready for his work. In course, the bo'sun has called him a 'squarehead,' and 'Sails,' a decent old Swede, is justly indignant at the insult; only Germans are squareheads, be it known. "Skvarehedd! Jou calls me skvarehedd! Ah vass no more skvarehedd as jou vass," he says, excited. "Jou tinks

d' sheep vass jours, mit your vash-bucket und deckscrub. Dere vass no places for d' sailmake, aindt it? Skvarehedd! Skvarehedd jourselluf, dam Cockney loafer!" There are the makings of a tidy row, but the Mate, coming from forrard, cuts it short.

"Now, then, you men there, quit yer chinning an' get on with the work!"

'Sails' tries to explain his grievance, but meets with little sympathy.

"Squarehead? Well, what the hell's th' odds, anyhow? If ye ain't a squarehead, ye'r as near it 's can be!"

This is rough on old 'Sails,' whose proud boast is that he has been "for thirty jahrs sailmake mit British sheeps in!" He goes sorrowfully to his work, and bends over his seam with many shakings of the head. "Skvarehedd!"

Time is drawing on, and I am getting tired of my long trick, when I see Martin coming round the deck-house. He has donned the familiar old red flannel shirt that he stands his wheel in, and, bareheaded as he always is at sea, he looks a typical old salt, a Western Ocean warrior. He mounts the lee ladder, crosses to windward in the fashion of the sea, and stands behind me. Here, I thought, is a rare chance to get at Martin. I give him the Mate's last steering order as I got it.

"Full an' by," I said, concealing a foolish grin; "full an' by, and no damned shinnanikin!" Martin looked at me curiously. "No shinnanikin," was a new order to a man who could steer blindfold, by the wind on his cheek; to a man who had steered great ships for perhaps half a century. On the other hand, orders were orders, meant to be repeated as they were given, seamanlike.

Martin squared himself, put a fresh piece of tobacco in position, and gripped the spokes. "Full 'n' by," he said, lifting his keen old eyes to the weather clews of the royals, "full 'n' by, 'n' no damned shinnanikin, it is!"

XV

‘ ‘OLY JOES’

“SHE’LL be one o’ them ‘oly Joes; them wot cruises among th’ Islands wi’ tracks an’ picter books for th’ bloomin’ ‘eathens!”

“ ‘O—ly Joes! ‘Oly Joes b’ damn,” said Martin. “ ‘Oly Joes is schooners same’s mission boats on th’ Gran’ Banks! . . . ‘Oly Joes! She’s a starvation Britisher, that’s wot *she* is; a pound an’ pint ruddy limejuicer by th’ set o’ them trucks; sailor’s misery in them painted bloomin’ ports o’ her.”

The subject of discussion was a full-rigged ship, standing upright in mid-Pacific, with all her canvas furled; looking as she might be in Queenstown Harbour awaiting orders. The south-east trades had blown us out of the tropics, and we held a variable wind, but there was nothing in the clean, fresh morning to cause even a Killala pilot to clew up, and the strange sight of an idle ship in a working breeze soon drew all hands from work and slumber, to peer over the head rail, to vent deep-sea logic over such an odd happening.

One of the younger hands had expressed an

opinion, and Martin, who held that “boys an’ Dutchmen should only speak when spoke to,” was scornfully indignant.

“ ’O—ly bloomin’ Joe! . . . ’Ow should she be an ’oly Joe, me young ‘know-all’? Wot d’ye know ’bout ’oly Joes, anyway?”

“Well! . . . ’eard as ’ow they clews up at eight bells o’ a Saturd’y night an’ prays, solid on, till they sets tawps’ls, jack-easy, ov a Monday mornin’!”

The laugh of derision sent him shamefaced to the fo’cas’le, and we talked about till there was a call for all hands to haul courses up and stand by to work ship. We hauled sharp up to windward, and, as we drew on, we saw what was the matter, and the sight caused our Old Man to dive below to his charts, cursing his wayward chronometer.

We saw the loom of a low island, scarce raised above the sea, with the surf breaking lightly, and the big ship piled up, all standing, on the verge of the weather reef. She looked to be but lately gone on, for her topsides were scarcely weatherbeaten. The boats were gone from her skids, and the davit tackles, swinging lubberly overside, told that her crew had left her. Aloft, she seemed to be in good trim, and her sails were as well stowed as if she were lying in the Canning Dock with her nose against the Custom House.

We lay-to for some time with our ensign apeak, but saw no sign of life aboard of the wreck, and when we fired a charge from our signal-gun (a rusty six-pounder), only a few sea-birds rose at the report. We were about to bear off on our course again when we saw two sails rounding the reef from the west side, and beating out.

There was but a light breeze, and they were some time in reaching us. One was a large boat with barked canvas, going well and weatherly, but the other, plainly a ship's lifeboat, hung heavy in the wind, and presently her crew lowered sail and came at us under oars. The big boat reached us first, her steersman taking every inch out of the fickle breeze. Plainly these were no deep-water sailormen, by the way they handled their boat. Smart, wiry, men, they had no look of castaways, and their light cotton clothes were cleanly and in order. As they sheered alongside they hailed us in clear, pleasant English: one shouted, in face of our line of wondering seamen, a strange sea salutation:

"God bless you, Captain Leish! Are you long out?"

"Blimy," said the bo'sun, "th' young 'un wos right after all. 'Oly Joes they be!"

"Mebbe 'oly Joes, but them ain't sailormen," muttered Martin sullenly; "them's Kanakas!"

Neither was quite right, for the boatmen were Pitcairn Islanders, and they were soon on deck greeting us in the friendly way of men from afar. Their leader went aft to the Old Man, and the rest remained to tell us of the wreck, in exchange for what scant knowledge we had of affairs.

The island was called Oeno. The ship was the *Bowden*, of Liverpool. She had gone ashore, six weeks back, in a northerly wind, with all sail on her: chronometer was twenty miles out: a bad case, the whole bottom was ripped out of her, and her ruined cargo of grain smelt abominably; two of their men were already sick. Ugh! . . . The crew of the ship had made for Pitcairn, ninety miles to the southward; they might be there now. They (the Islanders) had now been three weeks on the reef, salving what they could. There was not much: they were all pretty sick of the job, and wanted to get back to Pitcairn. Perhaps the Captain would give them a passage; it was on the way?

As we stood about, the Old Man and the leader of the Islanders came out of the cabin, and talked with the others. All wanted to get back to Pitcairn, and, the Old Man agreeing to give them a passage, we hoisted the smaller boat on our davits, towed the other astern, and were soon on our way towards Pitcairn.

When we got the ship in fair sailing trim, we had a rare opportunity of learning something of the Island and its people. Discipline was, for the time, relaxed, and but for working ship, in which the Islanders joined us, we had the time to ourselves. In the shade of the great sails, we stood or sat about, and our decks showed an unusual animation in the groups of men colloquing earnestly—strangers met by the way.

In stature the Islanders were perhaps above the average height, lithe and wiry, and but few were darker-skinned than a Spaniard or Italian. They spoke excellent English (though, among themselves, they had a few odd words), and their speech had no unnecessary adjectives. They had a gentle manner, and no ill language; sometimes our rough ship talk raised a slight protest; a raised hand, or a mild, "Oh, Sir!" Their leader, who was Governor of the Island, was a man in the prime of life, and, though dressed in dungarees and a worn cotton shirt, barefooted like the rest, had a quiet dignity in his manner and address that caused even our truculent Old Martin to call him Sir. There was one outlander among them, a wiry old man, an American whaler, who had been settled on the Island for many years; he it was who steered the boat, and he knew a little of navigation.

Their talk was mostly of ships that had visited the Island, and they asked us to run over the names of the ships that were at 'Frisco when we left; when we mentioned a ship that they knew, they were eager to know how it fared with her people. They had fine memories. They could name the Captain and Mates of each ship; of the whalers they had the particulars even down to the bulk of oil aboard. They seemed to take a pleasure in learning our names, and, these known, they let pass no opportunity of using them, slipping them into sentences in the oddest manner. They themselves had few surnames—Adams, Fletcher, Christian, and Hobbs (the names of their forefathers, the stark mutineers of the *Bounty*)—but their Christian names were many and curious, sometimes days of the week or even dates. They told us that there was a child named after our Old Man, who had called off the Island the day after it was born, five years ago; a weird name for a lassie! In one way the Islanders had a want. They had no sense of humour. True, they laughed with us at some merry jest of our Irish cook, but it was the laugh of children, seeing their elders amused, and though they were ever cheery-faced and smiling, they were strangely serious in their outlook.

We had light winds, and made slow progress,

and it was the afternoon of the second day when we saw Pitcairn, rising bold and solitary, on the lee bow. The sun had gone down before we drew nigh, and the Island stood sharp outlined against the scarlet and gold of a radiant western sky. Slowly the light failed, and the dark moonless night found us lifting lazily to the swell off the north point. The Islanders manned their boats and made off to the landing place. It was clock calm, and we heard the steady creak of their oars long after the dark had taken them. We drifted close to the land, and the scent of trees, lime and orange, was sweetly strange.

The boats were a long time gone, and the Old Man was growing impatient, when we heard voices on the water, and saw, afar off, the gleam of phosphorescence on the dripping oars. We heard the cheery hail, "The *Florence*, ahoy!" and burned a blue light to lead them on.

There were many new men in the boats, and they brought a cargo of fruit and vegetables to barter with us. The Old Man heaved a sigh of relief when he learned that the *Bowden's* crew were disposed of; they had taken passage in a whaler that had called, nine days before, on her way across to Valparaiso—a 'full' ship.

In odd corners the bartering began. Cotton clothes were in most demand; they had little

use for anything heavier. A basket of a hundred or more luscious oranges could be had for an old duck suit, and a branch of ripening bananas was counted worth a cotton shirt in a reasonable state of repair. Hansen had red cotton curtains to his bunk, full lengths, and there was keen bidding before they were taken down, destined to grace some island beauty. After the trade in clothing had become exhausted, there were odd items, luxuries to the Islanders, soap, matches, needles, thread. There was a demand for parts of old clocks—Martin it was who had a collection; they told us that there was a man on the island who was a famous hand at putting up and repairing such battered timepieces as we had to offer. They had some curios; rudely carved or painted bamboos, and sea-shells cunningly fashioned into pin-cushions, with Pitcairn in bold black letters, just as one might see "A Present from Largs." These were the work of the women-folk, and showed considerable ingenuity in the way the shells were jointed.

Although they seemed to have a good idea of the value of the trifles we offered, there was no 'haggling,' and latterly, when trade slackened, it came to be, "Sir! if you like this, I will give it to you, and you will give me something."

There was no cheating. Those of our crew

who would glory in 'bilking' a runner or a Dutchman were strangely decent, even generous, in their dealings. When we were called away to brace the yards round, stock was taken on both sides; the Islanders had their boats well laden, and our once trim deck was strewn with a litter of fruit and vegetables, like the top of Bell Street on a busy morning.

Light was breaking into the east when we laid the yards to a gentle breeze, and shortly the Islanders, with a great shaking of hands and "God bless you," got aboard their boats and sheered off. We were now to leeward of the Island, and the light showed us the bold wooded heights, high cliffs, steep to the water's edge, and the small houses scattered apart among the trees. Astern the boats had hoisted sail, and were standing in-shore, leaning gently to the scented land breeze. The ' 'oly Joes' were singing together as they sailed; the tune was an old familiar one that minded us of quiet Sabbath days in the homeland, of kirk and kent faces, and, somehow, we felt that it was we who were the 'bloomin' 'eathens,' for their song was 'Rock of Ages,' and it had a new sound, mellowed by distance and the water.

XVI

EAST, HALF SOUTH

ON a day of high action in sea and sky we fled, hot-foot, before the fury of a nor'-west gale. We had run her overlong. Old Jock, for once at any rate, had had his weather eye bedimmed. He was expecting a quick shift into the sou'-west, a moderate gale, and a chance to make his 'easting' round Cape Horn, but the wind hung stubbornly in the nor'-west; there was no break in the sky, no cessation in the black bursts of rain and sleet that swept upon us. A huge sea set up, and we were past the time when we could, in safety, heave her to the wind. There was nothing for it but to run—run she did.

We had tops'ls and a reefed foresail on her while daylight lasted, but on threat of darkness we stowed all but the foretops'l; wings enough for the weight of a hurricane wind. Under that narrow band of straining canvas she sped on into the murk of advancing night, while behind the lurid western sky showed threat of a mightier blast in bank upon bank of ragged storm-cloud. It was a wild night, never a wilder!

In the darkness the uncanny green shimmer of breaking seas gave an added terror to the scene of storm. Rain and stinging sleet swept constantly over us, thundering seas towered and curled at our stern, lapping viciously at the fleeting quarter, or, parting, crashed aboard at the waist, filling the decks man high with a power of destruction. Part of the bulwarks were torn from the side. That was, perhaps, the saving of us, for the seas swept off as fast as they thundered aboard, and the barque rode buoyant, when, with bulwarks standing, the weight of compassed water would have held her at mercy of the next towering greybeard. A boat on the forward skids was smashed to atoms and the wreck swept overboard, and every moment we looked to see our crazy half-deck go tottering to ruin. The fo'ca'sle was awash through a shattered door, and all hands were gathered on the poop for such safety as it held. There was nowhere else where man could stand on the reeling hull, and crouching at the rails, wet and chilled to the marrow, we spent the night a-watching.

The bo'sun and Martin and Hans took turns of the steering; that was work beyond the rest of us, and the most we could do was to stand by a-lee and bear on the spokes with the helmsman. Dutchy was the best steersman, and his steering

was no truer than the stout heart of him. Once she pooped, and the crest of a huge following sea came crashing on top of us. But for our hold-fasts, all would have been swept away. That was the time of trial. A falter at the helm—she would have ‘broached-to’—to utter destruction!

Amid the furious rush of broken water, ‘Dutchy’ stood fast at his post, though there was a gash on his forehead and blood running in his eyes—the work of the wrenching wheel.

We showed no lights; no lamps would stand to the weather. There was only the flickering binnacle, tended as never was temple fire, to show the compass card. By turns we kept a look-out from the tops’l yard, but of what use was that when we could steer but to one point. We were a ship of chance, and God help us and the outward bounder, ‘hove-to’ in the trough, that had come between us and the east that night!

How we looked for daylight! How it was long a-coming! How the mountain seas raced up and hove our barque, reeling to the blow, from towering crest to hollow of the trough! How every day of the twenty-five years of her cried out in creak of block, in clatter of chain sheet, in the ‘harping’ of the backstays, the straining groan of the burdened masts!

From time to time through the night the Mate

and some of us would go forward to see to the gear; there was no need to touch a brace, for the wind blew ominously true. When we got back again, battered and breathless, it was something to know that the foretops'l still stood the strain. It was a famous sail, a web of 'oo storm,' stitched and fortified at seam and roping for such a wind as this. Good luck to the hands that stitched it, to the dinky sail loft in the Govan Road that turned it out, for it stood us in stead that night!

Once an ill-stowed clew of the mains'l blew out with a sounding crack, and thrashed a 'devil's tattoo' on the yard. We thought it the tops'l gone—but no! Macallison's best stood bravely spread to the shrieking gale, and we soon had the ribbons of the main clew fast to the yard.

There was no broad dawn, no glow in the east to mark its breaking; the light grew out of the darkness. The masts and spars shaped themselves out of the gloom, till they stood outlined against the dull grey clouds. We could see the great seas, white-streaked by lash of driven spray, running up into the lowering sky. When day came, and the heaving wind-swept face of the waters became plain to us, we saw the stormy path round the Horn in its wildest, grandest mood. Stretching far to the black murky curtain—the rear of the last shrieking rain squall—the great

Cape Horn greybeards swept on with terrific force and grandeur, their mile-long crests hurtling skyward in blinding foam. The old barque ran well, reeling through the long, stormy slopes with buoyant spring, driving wildly to the trough, smashing the foam far aside. At times she poised with sickening uncertainty on the crest of a greater wave, then steadied, and leapt with the breaking water to the smoother hollow.

The Old Man stood by the helmsman, 'conning' her on. All night he had stood there, ordering, to the shock of following seas, a steady voiced command. Never a gainly man—short-legged, broad, uncouth—his was yet a figure in keeping with the scene; unkempt and haggard, blue-lipped, drenched by sea and rain, he was never less than a Master of the Sea. At daybreak we heard a hail from the tops'l yard, and saw the 'look-out' pointing ahead. Peering down the wind, we made out the loom of a ship rising and falling in the trough of the sea. A big 'four-master' she proved, lying 'hove-to' the wind. We shuddered to think of what would have been if daylight had been further delayed!

Out of the mist and spray we bore down on her and flew by, close to her stern. We could see figures on her poop staring and pointing, a man with glasses at his eyes. Only a fleeting glimpse—

for she was soon swallowed up by the murk astern, and we were driving on. The shift of wind came suddenly. Nearly at noon there was a heavier fall of rain, a shrieking squall that blew as it had never blown. The Old Man marked the signs—the scud of the upper clouds, a brightening low down in the south.

“Stan’ by . . . head . . . yards,” he yelled, shouting hoarsely to be heard. “Quick . . . the word!”

All hands struggled to the braces, battling through the wash of icy water that swept over the decks.

The squall passed, followed by a lull that served us to cant the yards; then, sharp as a knife-thrust, the wind came howling out of the sou’-west. The rain ceased and the sky cleared as by a miracle. Still it blew and the seas, turned by the shift of wind, broke and shattered in a whirl of confusion. For a time we laboured through the treacherous cross sea—the barque fretting and turning to windward, calling for all of ‘Dutchy’s’ cunning at the helm, but it was none so ill with the sun in sight and a clearing overhead.

“Blast ye,” said the Old Man, shaking his benumbed arms towards the sou’-west. “Blast ye—but ye’ve been a long time comin’!”

The wind was now to his liking, it was the

weather he had looked for, and sure enough, as quick succeeding squalls rolled up on us, the sea grew less and ran truer, and the barque sailed easier. The wind fell to a moderate gale, and by four in the afternoon we had a reefed foresail and the tops'ls set, and were staggering along at a great speed.

The decks were yet awash, there was no comfort on deck or below; but through it all we had one consoling thought: *East, half south*, we were covering the leagues that lay between us and our journey's end!

XVII

ADRIFT !

CAR-CONDUCTING may be a work of niceness and despatch, but it is ill training for working on the spars of a rolling ship. John Cutler was mousing clew-blocks on the main-yardarm, the ship lurched heavily, the foot-ropes were wet and slippery, and John, ill-balanced and unready, was cast into the sea. Instant, there was the cry "Man overboard"; the Old Man ordered the helm down, and, springing to the rack, threw a lifebuoy from the starboard quarter; the Second Mate, not seeing him throw it, threw another from the port.

We were below at the time, just after dinner about to turn in, when we heard the call. All hands ran on deck. The watch were swinging the head yards; some were unlashng the lee boat. We joined them, tore the cover off, hooked the tackles, and swung her out. There was confusion; the Old Man and the Mate shouting cross orders, the boat swinging wildly on the tackles, men crowding about the rail.

"Another hand in the boat," yelled the Second Mate, as he sprang into the stern-sheets, "lower away, you!"

There was a whirr of block sheaves, the falls smoking on the pins, a splash, a rush of water on the rusty side. "Bow off, there! Bow off, you!" and I found myself in the bow of the boat, tugging frantically at the heft of a long oar.

There was that in the steady *clack—clack-a* of oar on rowlock to soothe the tremors of our moment of excited haste. Astern was the barque, her mainyards aback, rolling heavily athwart the swell; we were leaving her slowly, for, though the breeze was light, we had to climb the long steep slopes of a Cape Horn swell. Old Martin's broad back was bent to the oar in front of me, Houston beyond, and the bo'sun at the stroke. The Second Mate was standing up at the tiller, listening for a hail, gazing anxiously ahead for gleam of a painted lifebuoy. *Clack—clack-a, clack—clack-a*; the bo'sun was setting us a feverish stroke; it couldn't last. *Clack—clack-a, clack—clack-a*; we were already breathing heavily. Up and down the heaving swell we went; crawling laboured to the crown—the shudder, and the quick, sickening descent! *Clack—clack-a!* Would it ever end? Now I was pulling out of stroke—a feeble paddle. My neck! I had the pain there! . . . "Bow,

there! Lay in, an' keep yer eyes about. He must be here somewhere!"

I laid in my oar, and faced about. We could not see far, the swell was too great. When the boat rose we had a hasty glimpse of the face of the water, but in the hollow, the great glassy walls rose ahead and astern. We thought we had overrun the distance, and lay-to for a time. Then on again, shouting as we went. The Second Mate saw something on the crest of a roller, just a glimpse, and we pulled to it. It was Cutler's round cap; we had steered a good course. Near by we found him with his arm twisted round the grab rope of the lifebuoy. He was dazed and quiet when we dragged him over the stern.

"Oh, Chris'! Oh, Chris'!" was all he said.

We were about to return when Mr. M'Kellar thought of the second lifebuoy.

"Bow, there! D'ye see the other buoy; it'll be somewhere t' th' norrard!"

I stood up, unsteadily. There was something white in the hollow of a farther roller. We edged over; it was but a fleck of foam. Farther over, up and down the swell we climbed until we found it. We turned to row back. "Back starboard! Pull port, you!" the boat's head swung round, and we rose quickly on the following swell.

There was a startled cry from the stern-sheets,
“*O Dhia! O Dhia!*”

Well might M'Kellar cry out, for, unobserved of any, the mist had closed in on us. There was no ship in sight, no point to steer for—nothing to guide; there were only the great glassy walls rising and falling, moving up into the thickening mist.

A panic seized us; furiously we rowed, driving the boat into it with no thought of course or distance. She was awash underfoot before we exhausted ourselves, and lay, breathing heavily, over the oars.

The bo'sun was the first to regain a state of sanity. “Vast rowin’,” he cried; “vast rowin’! We cawn’t do no good like this. Liy ’er to, Mister! Liy-to; it’s the ownly thing!”

M'Kellar put the tiller over, and we brought her head to swell again.

We stood up, all eyes a-watching; we shouted together, listened intent; there was no friendly sail looming in the mist, no answer to our cries. We rowed aimlessly. Sometimes we fancied we could hear a hail or a creak of blocks. We would lash blindly at the oars till the foam flew, then lie-to again. There was no compass in the boat, no food; only a small barreca of water. Sometimes it is thick weather off the Horn for days! If the mist held?

Cutler, crouching, shivering in the stern-sheets, began to cry like a child. Cold, wet, unnerved, he was feeling it worst of us all. "Shut up," said the Second Mate, dragging off his jacket and throwing it over the shivering lad. Old Martin was strangely quiet; he, too, was shivering. He had been just about to turn in when he heard the call, and was ill-clad for boat service. Only once did he show a bit of his old gallant truculence. "All right, Mister! If we loses track o' th' ship, we've got plenty o' previsions! We can eat them lifebuoys, wot ye was so keen a-gettin'!"

"Oh, quit yer chinnin', ye old croak! 'Oo's talkin' abaht losin' track o' th' ship!" The bo'sun didn't like to think! Cutler became light-headed, and began to talk wildly; he would stand up, pointing and shouting out, "There she is, there!" Then he began to make queer noises, but soon became very quiet. There was the canvas boat-cover lying in the bottom of the boat. The bo'sun put this round him, and I was ordered aft to rub him down.

The cold became intense. When the heat of our mad spurt had passed, depression came on us and we cowered, chilled to the marrow by the mist, on the gratings of the heaving boat. Long we lay thus, Houston and the bo'sun pulling a listless stroke to keep her head to the swell. We had no

count of time. Hours must have passed, we thought.

"The Dago 'll hae ma trick at th' wheel, noo," said Houston strangely. "It wis ma turn at fower bells!"

No one heeded him.

"They'll hae tae shift some o' th' hauns i' th' watches, eh? . . . wi' you, an' Martin, an' th' young fla' no' there!" he continued.

"Oh, shut up, damn ye! Shut up, an' listen. *O Dhia!* can ye hear nocht?" M'Kellar, standing up on the stern-sheets, was casting wild glances into the pall that enshrouded us. "Here! All together, men—a shout!"

A weakly chorus went out over the water.

Silence.

Suddenly Houston stood up. "Maister, did ye hear that—a cheep!" We thought that he was going off like Cutler; we could hear nothing. "A cheep, Ah telt ye, Maister; a cheep, as shair's daith!" Houston was positive. "The jerk o' a rudder, or" . . . Almost on top of us there was a flash of blinding fire, the roar of a gun followed!

We sprang to the oars, shouting madly—shaping out of the mist was the loom of square sail, there was sound of a bell struck. No need now to talk of eating lifebuoys; Houston would be in time for his trick at the wheel!

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“What th’ blazes kept ye, Mister? We saw ye pickin’ th’ man up! What made ye turn t’ th’ norrard?” The Old Man had a note of anger in his voice.

“Well, Sir, we couldn’t see th’ other buoy, an’ I thought it a peety if we didn’t pick it up; an’ while we were lookin’ for it, we lost track o’ th’ ship,” said Mister M’Kellar, ashamed and miserable.

The Mate broke in, “Ye damn fool! D’ye mean t’ tell us ye risked a whole boat’s crew for a tuppence-ha’penny lifebuoy? B’gad, it would serve ye right if ye had t’ go seekin’ like th’ Flying Dutchman!” The Mate continued to curse such stupidity, but the Old Man, though permitting the Mate to rail, was wonderfully silent. After all, M’Kellar, like himself, was a Scotchman, and much may be forgiven to a Scotchman—looking after his owners’ property!

XVIII

“—AFTER FORTY YEAR!”

“**M**ARTIN?” . . . “*Huh!*” “Lewis?” . . .
 “*Iss!*” “Granger?” . . . “’Ere!”
 “Ulricks?” . . . “*Ya!*” “Dago Joe?” . . .
 “*Ser!*” “’Ansen?” . . . “*Yep!*” “Bunn?”
 . . . “*Yes!*” “Munro?” . . . “*Here!*” “Eccles?
 —ECCLES!—ECC—Damn your eyes, lay ’long
 ’ere! You goin’ t’ keep awl ’ans waitin’?” Eccles
 joined us fumbling with the buttons of his jacket.
 (Eccles, for the time limit!) “Awl ’ere,” con-
 tinued the bo’sun; then reported to the Mate,
 “Watch is aft, Sir!”

A surly growl that might have been, “Relieve the wheel and look-out,” came from the poop and we were dismissed muster; the starboard watch to their rest; we of the port to take our turn on deck.

It was a cold, raw morning that fell to our lot. A light wind, blowing from north of west in fitful puffs, scarcely slanted the downpour of thin, insistent rain; rain that by the keenness of it ought to have been snow or sleet. The sea around was shrouded in mist, and breaking day, coming in

with a cold, treacherous half-light, added to the illusion that made the horizon seem scarcely a length away. The barque was labouring unsteadily, with a long westerly swell—the ghost of the Cape Horn ‘greybeards’—running under her in oily ridges.

It needed but a bite of freshening wind to rouse the sea; at the lash of a sudden gale the ‘greybeards’ would be at us again—whelming and sweeping. Even in quiet mood they were loath to let us go north, and we jarred and rattled, rolled, lurched, and wallowed as they hove at us. Heave as they did, we were still able to make way on our course, standing with yards in to the quartering wind and all plain sail on her.

Thick weather! The horizon closed to us at a length or so ahead. But she was moving slowly, four knots at the most, and we were well out of the track of ships! Oh, it was all right—all right; and aft there the Mate leaned over the poop rail with his arms squared and his head nod-nodding—now and then!

As the light grew, it seemed to bring intenser cold. Jackets were not enough; we donned coats and oilskins and stamped and stamped on the fore-deck, yawning and muttering and wishing it was five o’clock and the ‘doctor’ ready with the blessed coffee: the coffee that would make men of us;

vile ‘hogwash’ that a convict would turn his face at, but what seemed nectar to us at daybreak, down there in fifty-five!

By one bell the mist had grown denser, and the Mate sung out suddenly and angrily for the fog-horn to be sounded.

“Three blasts, d’ye ’ear,” said the bo’sun, passing the horn up to Dago, the look-out. “*Uno! . . . Doo! . . . Tray!*” (Three fingers held up.) . . . “*Tray*, ye burnt scorpion! . . . An’ see that ye sounds ’em proper, or I’ll come up there an’ hide th’ soul-case out o’ ye! . . . (Cow-punchin’ hoodlum! Good job I knows ’is bloomin’ lingo!)”

Now we had a tune to our early rising, a doleful tune, a tune set to the deepening mist, the heaving sea, at dismal break of day. *R-r-ah! . . . R-r-ah! . . . Ra!* was the way it ran; a mournful bar, with windy gasps here and there, for Dago Joe was more accustomed to a cowhorn.

“A horn,” said Welsh John suddenly. “Did ’oo hear it?”

No one had heard. We were gathered round the galley door, all talking, all telling the ‘doctor’ the best way to light a fire quickly.

“*Iss!* A horn, I tell ’oo! . . . Listen! . . . Just after ours is sounded!”

R-r-ah! . . . R-r-ah! . . . R-ah! Joe was improving.

We listened intently. . . . "There now," said John!

Yes! Sure enough! Faint rasps answering ours. Ulrichs said three; two, I thought!

"Don't ye 'ear that 'orn, ye dago fiddler," shouted the bo'sun. ". . . 'Ere! Hup there, one of ye, an' blow a proper blast! That damn hoodlum! Ye couldn't 'ear 'is trumpetin' at th' back of an area railin's!"

John went on the head; the bo'sun aft to report.

A proper blast! The Welshman had the trick of the wheezing 'gadget.' . . . Ah! There again! . . . Three blasts, right enough! . . . She would be a square rigger, running, like ourselves! . . . Perhaps we were making on her! . . . The sound seemed louder. . . . It came from ahead!

R-R-R-R-R-AH! . . . R-R-R-R-R-AH! . . . R-R-R-R-R-AH!

. . . *R-r-r-r-eh!* . . . *R-r-r-r-eh!* . . . *R-r-r-r-eh!*

The Mate was now on the alert, peering and listening. At the plain answer to our horn, he rapped out orders. "Lower away main an' fore-to'gal'ns'ls . . . let 'em hang, an' lay aft and haul th' mains'l up! Come aft here, one of you boys, and call th' Captain! Tell him it's come down thick! Sharp, now!"

I went below and roused the Old Man.

“Aye . . . all right,” he said, feeling for his sea-boots. (South’ard of the ‘forties’ Old Jock slept ‘all standing,’ as we say.) . . . “Thick, eh? . . . Tell th’ Mate t’ keep th’ horn goin’! . . . A ship, ye say? . . . Running, eh? . . . Aye! All right . . . I’ll be up. . . .”

I had scarcely reached the poop again before the Old Man was at my back. “Thick, b’Goad,” he said, rubbing his eyes. “Man, man! Why was I not called before?”

The Mate muttered something about the mist having just closed in. . . . “Clear enough t’ be goin’ on before that,” he said.

“Aye, aye! Where d’ye mak’ this ship? Ye would see her before the mist cam doon, eh?”

“Sound that horn, forrard there,” shouted the Mate, moving off to the gangway! “Keep that horn going, there!”

John pumped a stirring blast. . . . R-R-R-R-R-AH! . . . R-R-R-R-R-AH! . . . R-R-R-R-R-AH!

We bent forward with ears strained to catch the distant note.

. . . *R-r-r-r-eh!* . . . At the first answering blast Old Jock raised his head, glancing fearfully round. . . . *R-r-r-r-eh!* . . . *R-r-r-r*—“Down hellum! DOWN HELLUM! DOWN,” he yelled, running aft to the wheel! “Haul yards forrard!

Le'go port braces! Let 'm rip! Le'go an' haul! . . . Quick, Mist'r! Christ! What ye standin' at? . . . Ice! Ice, ye bluidy eedi't! Ice! Th' echo! Let go! LE'GO AN' HAUL! LE'GO!"

Ice! The Mate stood stupid for an instant—then jumped to the waist—to the brace pins—roaring hoarse orders. "All hands on deck! Haul away, there! All hands! On deck, men—for your lives!"

Ice! At the dread cry we ran to the ropes and tailed on with desperate energy! Ice! The watch below, part dressed, swarmed from house and fo'cas'le and hauled with us—a light of terror in their eyes—the terror that comes with stark reason—when the brain reels from restful stupor at a trumpet of alarms!

Ice! The decks, that so lately had been quiet as the air about us, resounded to the din of sudden action! Yards swinging forward with a crash—blocks *whirring*—ropes hurtling from the pins—sails lifting and thrashing to the masts—shouts and cries from the swaying haulers at the ropes—hurried orders—and, loud over all, the raucous bellow of the foghorn when Dago Joe, dismayed at the confusion, pumped furiously, *Ra! Ra! Ra! Ra! Ra!*

. . . *Reh! Reh! Reh! Reh! Reh!* . . . Note for note—the echo—out of the mist!

“Belay, all! Well, mainyards!” The order steadied us. We had time now to look! . . . There was nothing in sight! . . . No towering monster looming in our path—no breakers—no sea—no sky; nothing! Nothing but the misty wall that veiled our danger! The Unknown! The Unseen!

She was swinging slowly against the scend of the running swell—laying up to the wind. Martin had the wheel and was holding the helm down, his keen eyes watching for the lift that would mark the limit of steering-way. The Old Man stood by the compass, bending, peering, sniffing—nosing at the keen air—his quick eyes searching the mist—ahead—abeam—astern. . . . Martin eased the helm; she lay quietly with sails edged to the wind, the long swell heaving at her—broad-side on.

Suddenly a light grew out of the mist and spread out on both bows—a luminous sheen, low down on the narrowed sea-line! The ‘ice-blink’! Cold! White!

At the first glow the Old Man started—his lips framed to roar an order! . . . No order came!

Quickly he saw the hopelessness of it; what was to happen was plain, inevitable! Broad along the beam, stretching out to leeward, the great dazzling ‘ice-blink’ warned him of a solid barrier,

miles long, perhaps! The barque lay to the wind, at mercy of the swell, drifting dead to leeward at every heave! . . . On the other tack, perhaps? There was a misty gap to the south of us; no 'ice-blink' there! . . . If she could be put about? . . . No, there was no chance! . . . To gather speed to put her about he would have to bear off towards the brightening sheen! Already the roar of the swell, lashing at the base, was loud in our ears! . . . There was no room! No sea-room to wear or stay!

"Embayed!" he said bitterly, turning his palms up! . . . "All hands aft and swing th' port boat out!"

The port boat? The big boat? Had it come, so soon, to that? More than one of us cast an anxious look at the broad figure of our Master as we ran aft. He stood quite still, glaring out at the ice ring.

"This is it, eh!" he muttered, unheeding the stir and cries of us. "This is it—after forty year!"

Madly we tore and knifed at the lashings, working to clear the big boat. She was turned down on the skids (the fashion of thrifty 'limejuicers'), bound and bolted to stand the heavy weather. We were handless, unnerved by the suddenness of it all, faulty at the task. The roar of breaking

water spurred us on. . . . A heave together! Righted, we hooked the falls and swayed her up. The Mate looked aft for the word. “Aye,” said the Old Man. “Oot wi’ her, an’ try tae tow th’ heid roun’! On th’ ither tack we nicht——” He left the words unfinished! Well he knew we could never drag three thousand tons against that swell!

A wild outcry turns our eyes forward. Dago Joe (forgotten on the lookout) is running aft, his precious horn still slung from his shoulders. “*Arretto! Arretto! Arretto!*” He yells as he runs. “*Arretto, Capitan!*” waving his arms and signing to the Old Man to stop the ship! Behind him, over the bows, we see the clear outline of a small berg—an outflung ‘calf’ of the main ice! There is no time! Nothing can be done! Small as the berg is—not the height of our lower yards—it has weight enough to sink us, when aided by the heaving swell!

“Quick with th’ boat, there,” yells the Old Man! He runs over to the companion-way and dives below, jostling the Second Mate, who is staggering up under a weight of biscuit bags.

In a moment we have closed with the ice and are hammering and grinding at the sheer glistening wall. At the first impact the boom goes with a crash! Then fore-to’gallant mast—yards—sails

—rigging—all hurtling to the head, driving the decks in! A shelf of solid ice, tons weight of it, crashes aboard and shatters the fore-hatch! Now there is a grind and scream of buckling iron, as the beams give to the strain—ring of stays and guy-ropes, parting at high tension—crash of splintering wood! The heaving monster draws off, reels, and comes at us again! Another blow and——

“ ‘Vast lowering! Hold on! Hold on the boat there!’ The Old Man, come on deck with his treasured papers, has seen more than the wreck of the head! He runs to the compass—a look—then casts his eyes aloft. “Square mainyards!” His voice has the old confident ring: the ring we know. “Square main yards! . . . A hand t’ th’ wheel!”

Doubting, we hang around the boat. She swings clear, all ready! The jar of a further blow sets us staggering for foothold! What chance? . . . “A hand t’ th’ wheel, here,” roars the Old Man. Martin looks up . . . goes back to his post.

A man at the wheel again! No longer the fearful sight of the main post deserted; no longer the jar and rattle of a handless helm! Martin’s action steadies us. What dread, when the oldest of us all stands there grasping the spokes, waiting

the order? . . . We leave the swinging boat and hurry to the braces!

A ‘chance’ has come! The power of gales long since blown out is working a way for us: the ghostly descendants of towering Cape Horn ‘greybeards’ have come to our aid!

As we struck, sidling on the bows, the swell has swept our stern round the berg. Now we are head to wind and the big foresail is flat against the mast, straining sternward!

It is broad day, and we see the ‘calf’ plainly as we drift under stern-way apart. The gap widens! A foot—a yard—an oar’s-length! Now the wind stirs the canvas on the main—a clew lifts—the tops’ls rustle and blow out drawing finely! Her head still swings!

“Foreyard’s! Le’go an’ haul!” roars the Old Man. We are stern on to the main ice. Already the swell—recurving from the sheer base—is hissing and breaking about us. There is little room for sternboard. “Le’go an’ haul!” We roar a heartening chorus as we drag the standing head yards in.

Slowly she brings up . . . gathers way . . . moves ahead! The ‘calf’ is dead to windward, the loom of the main ice astern and a-lee. The wind has strengthened: in parts the mist has cleared. Out to the south’ard a lift shows clear water.

We are broad to the swell now, but sailing free as Martin keeps her off! From under the bows the broken boom (still tethered to us by stout guy-ropes) thunders and jars as we move through the water.

“Cut and clear away!” roars Old Jock. “Let her go!”

Aye, let her go! . . . We are off . . . crippled an’ all . . . out for open sea again!

XIX

IN LITTLE 'SCOTLAND'

IT was all to no purpose that Lloyds' agent pointed out the convenience and advantage of the inner port: it was as useless for the local pilot to look grave and recall dire happenings to Captains who had elected to effect their repairs in the outer harbour—just here, at Port William. Old Jock's square jaw was set firm, his eyes were narrowed to a crafty leer; he looked on everyone with unconcealed suspicion and distrust. He was a shipmaster of the old school, 'looking after his Owners' interest.' He had put in 'in distress' to effect repairs. . . . He was being called upon to spend *money!*

"No, no!" he said to all their reasoning. "My anchor's doon, an' here I stoap! I've conseedered a' that ye've pit furrit! 'Convenience tae th' toon, if supplies are needit'? (I'll no' need that mony!) . . . 'Nae distance tae bring th' workin' gang'? (I've a wheen men here mysel'!) . . . 'Nae dues tae pay'? (We're jist as cheap here!) . . . No, no, Maister Fordyce! Ye can jist mak'

up yeer mind on that! We'll dae a' th' repairs oot here! I'm no' comin' in!"

"Oh weel! Jist as ye like, Captain! Jist as ye like! . . . But—as th' pilot here 'll tell ye—ye're in a verra bad poseetion if it comes on tae blow f'ae the south-east! An' south-east 's a hard win', I'm tellin' ye!"

"Aye, aye! Jist that! . . . Weel, if it comes tae blow frae th' south-east (I'm no much feart o' that at this time o' th' year) we're in a guid berth tae slip anchor an' run her in tae Port Stanley. It'll be time enough then! But I'm no' goin' in there if I can help it! . . . If I brocht her in therr"—pointing to the narrows that led to the inner harbour—"I micht hae tae wait for a fair win' tae bring her oot, when oor bit damage is sortit. . . . No, no! We'll dae fine oot here. Smooth watter! Guid holdin' ground!"

"Oh, the holding ground is all right," said the pilot. "Eight fathom . . . mud and stones! Good enough for anything but south or south-east."

"Oh, aye!" continued the Old Man. "We'll dae fine here. . . . If it wisna' for that bowsprit bein' steeved up and th' rivets stertit in th' bows o' her, I widna' be here at a' Spars? . . . We can mak' a' th' spars oorsel's; tho' I'm no' sayin' but that I'd be glad o' a spar

or twa—at a moderate cost. A moderate cost, mind ye!”

The agent laughed. “Oh weel, Captain! We’re no’ exactly Jews doon here, though they say an Aberdonian (I’m fa’e Aberdeen mysel’) is th’ next thing! We can gi’e ye yeer spairs—at a moderate cost! . . . But I’ll tell ye again, Captain, ye’ll lose time by stoappin’ oot here. A’ this traffiking back an’ furrit tae Port Stanley! Bringin’ th’ workmen aff in th’ mornin,’ an’ takin’ them hame at e’en! Ye’ll no’ get th’ smiths tae stay oan th’ ship. It’ll be, ‘Hey, Jimmy! Whaur’s ma lang drift?’ or, ‘Jock, did ye bring oot th’ big “Monday?”’ . . . an’ then naethin’ ’ll dae but they maun be awa’ back tae th’ Port, tae look for theer tools in th’ bar o’ th’ Stanley Airms!”

“Oh, aye!” said the Old Man. “I ken them! They’ll be as keen for a dram doon here as onywhere! But we’ll attend tae that. As for th’ traffiking, I’ve a big boat an’ a wheen idle lauds therr that’ll be nane the waur o’ a lang pull! . . . Onyway, I’m no’ goin’ t’ risk bein’ held up for a fair win’ when th’ time comes . . . an’ ye may tak’ it that we’re no’ goin’ t’ lose time owre th’ joab! A wheen smiths, an’ mebbe a carpenter or twa, is a’ I want . . . an’ if we can arrange wi’ th’ Captain o’ this schooner—ye were speakin’ aboot—t’ tak’ a hunner’ or a hunner’ an’ fifty ton

o' cargo . . . for th' time bein'. . . . No! Jist twa beams tae be cut an' strappit. . . . A screw-jack an' a forge or twa! We can . . . straighten them oot in their place! . . . Naethin' wrang below th' sheer strake! . . . Jist plain rivettin'. . . ."

Talking of the repairs and their relation to the great god of Economy, Old Jock led the way to the gangway and watched his visitors depart.

In all he said the Old Man spoke his 'braidest' Scotch. This was right! We had reached the Falkland Islands in safety, and what more natural than that he should speak the language of the country? Even the German saloon-keepers who had boarded us on arrival—to proffer assistance in our distress—said 'aye' for yes, and 'Ach! Awa wi' ye'—a jocular negative! Nor did the resemblance to our 'ain countree' end there. Port William was typical of a misty Scotch countryside: the land about us was as bleak and home-like as a muirland in the Stewartry.

A bare hill-side sloping to the sea, with here and there straggling acres of cultivated land. A few wooden houses nestling in the bends and gullies, where small streamlets ran. Uplands, bare of trees and hedge growth, stretching away inland in a smooth coat of waving grass. Grass, grass, grass—a sheep fank—a patch of stony hill-side—a solitary hut, with blue smoke curling above—a

misty sky-line—lowering clouds, and the setting sun breaking through in fleeting patches. Port William! A quiet place for anchorage after our stormy times! No ships riding with us under the lee of the land! No sign of human life or movement in the lonely bay! No noise! Quiet! Only the plaintive cries of sea-birds that circled and wheeled about us, and the distant *baa-ing* of sheep on the green hill-side!

‘No time was to be lost,’ as the Old Man had said. Soon the quiet of our lonely anchorage was broken by a din of strenuous work. The sea-birds flew affrighted from the clang of fore-hammers and the roar of forge fires.

Our damage was all on the bows. The to’-gallan’-mast, in its fall, had wrecked the star-board side of the fo’cas’le; the decks were smashed in; some beams were broken, others were twisted and bent. The hull plating had not escaped, and a big rent showed where the grinding ice had forced the stout cat-head from its solid bed. These were minor affairs—something might have been done to put them right without coming to port—but the bowsprit! Ah! It was the bowsprit that had brought us in!

“It’s no use talking,” the Old Man had said when he and the Mate were considering the

damage. "That bowsprit! . . . Spars? . . . We could make th' spars good; . . . an' we could do a fair joab wi' th' ironwork! . . . But th' bowsprit! . . . No, no! We can't sail th' ship unless we're sure o' th' head-gear! . . . No use! No use talking, Mister! We'll have t' bear up for th' Falklands, and get that put to rights!"

If further cause were needed to justify the serious course of 'putting in,' they had it when the carpenter reported water in the forepeak; and it was discovered that the broken jibboom had not hammered at the bows for nothing. No hesitation then! No talk! The course was set!

Although the Falklands are famed as a refuge for vessels 'in distress,' there were then no great facilities for repair. It is enough if the ships stagger into port in time to save the lives of their crews. Port Stanley had many such sheer hulks lying to rust and decay in the landlocked harbour. Good ships that had cleared from the Channel in seaworthiness; crossed the Line with a boastful "*All well!*" to a homeward-bounder; steered south into the 'roaring forties'—to meet disaster in fire, or wind, or sea, and falter into the Falklands with the boats swung out!

There was then no firm of ship repairers on the Islands. The most Mr. Fordyce could do for us was to find workmen, and a schooner to take part

of our cargo and lighten us sufficiently to get at the leaky rivets. Old Jock had to set up as a master shipwright and superintend the repairs himself. And who better? Had he not set Houston's leg as straight as a Gilmorehill Professor could? He was the man; and there was no sign of hesitation when he got out his piece of chalk and made marks (as many and as mysterious as a Clydeside gaffer's) on the damaged ironwork! Such skilled labour as he could get—'smiths' from the sheep camps (handy men, who were by turns stonemasons or woolpackers or ironworkers)—were no great hands at ship-work; but the Old Man, with his rough, chalked sketches, could make things plain; he had, too, the great advantage of knowing the Islanders' language and its proper application to the ordering of 'wis'like' men! What might have been put elsewhere as, "What th' hell sort of work do you call this?" he translated to, "Man, man, Jock Steel! Could ye no' pit a fairer bend oan that knee?" . . . Jock (who would have thrown down his tools, and "on with his jacket" at the first) would perhaps turn red at the kindlier reproof, mutter "Well, well," and have another try at the stubborn knee.

It was slow work, for all the din and clatter. Forge fires are devilish in the hands of an unskilled blower; rivets break and twist and get

chilled when the striking is squint and irregular; iron is tough and stubborn when leverage is misapplied. There were difficulties. (Difficulties that wee Jonny Docherty, a Partick rivet 'b'ye,' would have laughed at!) The difficulty of strapping cut beams to make them span their former length; the difficulty of small rivets and big holes, of small holes and big rivets . . . the sheer despair when sworn measurements go unaccountably and mysteriously wrong in practice.

All difficulties! Difficulties to be met and overcome!

Every one of us had a turn at the ironwork. There was odd work that we could do while the 'smiths' were heating and hammering at the more important sections. We made a feeble show, most of us; but Joe Granger gained honour in suggesting ways and showing how things were done. It was the time of Granger's life. He was not even a good sailorman. His steering was pitiful. Didn't Jones have to show him how the royal buntlines led? What did Martin say about the way he passed a head-earring? A poor sailorman! . . . Yet here he was: bossing us around; Able Seamen carrying tools to him; Old Man listening quite decently to his suggestions—even the hard-case Mate (who knew Granger, if any-one did) not above passing a word now and then!

. . . And all because Granger had worked in the Union Ironworks at 'Frisco. At first I am sure it was a *holder-on* he told us he had been, but before our job had gone far it was a whilom *foreman shipwright* who told us what was to be done! . . . If Armstrong, the carpenter, had not taken up a firm stand when it came to putting in the deck, there would have been hints that we had a former *under-manager* among us! It was the time of Joe's life, and the bo'sun could only chuckle and grin and wag his head in anticipation of 'proper sailorwork' on the mast and spars.

It was good for us brassbounders to lie at Port William, where there was little but the work in progress to interest us. In the half-deck we were full of ship repairs. Little else was talked about when we were below. Each of us carried a small piece of chalk, all ready to make rough drawings to explain our ideas. We chalked on the walls, the table, the deck, the sea-chests, lines and cross-lines, and bends and knees—no matter what, so long as there were plenty of round "O's" to show where the rivets were to go. We explained to one another the mysteries of ship construction, talked loftily of breasthooks and sheer strakes, and stringers and scantlings . . . and were as wise after the telling! That was while the ironwork repairs were in progress. In a week or more we

were spar-makers. Jock Steel and his mates put down their drifts and hammers, and took up adzes and jack-planes. We were getting on! We had no time for anyone who drew sketches of riveting. It was 'striking cambers' and 'fairing' and 'tapering' now, and Joe Granger got a cool reception when he came along to the half-deck after work was over for the day. Poor Joe had fallen from his high place! With the bowsprit hove down and securely strapped and riveted, and the last caulking blow dealt at the leaky doubling, his services became of small account. No one in the fo'cas'le would listen any longer to his tales of structural efficiency. There was no spar-making in the Union Ironworks at 'Frisco. Joe had to shut up, and let Martin and the bo'sun instruct the ship's company in the art of masting and rigging—illustrated by match-sticks and pipe-stems!

There were pleasant intervals to our work on board—days when we rowed the big boat through the Narrows to Port Stanley and idled about the 'town,' while the Old Man and Mr. Fordyce were transacting business (under good conditions) in the bar-parlour of the Stanley Arms. We made many friends on these excursions. The Falklanders have warm hearts, and down there the Doric is the famous passport. We were welcome everywhere, though Munro and I had to do most

of the talking. It was something for the Islanders to learn how the northern Scottish crops had fared (eighteen months ago), or 'whatna' catch of herrings fell to the Loch Fyne boats (last season but one).

There was no great commercial activity in the 'town.' The '*Great Britain*' hulk, storehouse for the wool, was light and high in the water. The sawmill hulks were idle for want of lumber to be dressed. It was the slack time, they told us; the slack time before the rush of the wool-shearing. In a week, or a month at the most, the sheep would be ready for the shears. Then—ah, then!—Wully Ramsey (who had a head for figures) would be brought forward, and, while his wind held out, would hurl figures and figures at us, all proving that 'Little Scotland,' for its size, was a 'ferr wunner' at wool production.

The work of the moment was mostly at breaking up the wreck of the *Glenisla*, a fine four-masted barque that had come in 'with the flames as high as th' foreyard,' and had been abandoned as a total wreck. Her burnt-out shell lay beached in the harbour, and the plates were being drifted out, piece by piece, to make sheep tanks and bridge work. It was here that the Old Man—'at a moderate cost, mind ye'—picked up a shell-plate and knees and boom irons to make good our wants. A

spar, too (charred, but sound), that we tested by all the canons of carpentry—tasting, smelling, twanging a steel at one end and listening for the true, sound note at the other. It was ours, after hard bargaining, and Mason, the foreman wrecker, looked ill-pleased with his price when we rolled the timber down to tide mark, launched, and towed it away.

Pleasant times! But with the setting up of the new boom the Old Man was anxious to get under weigh. The to'gallant mast could wait till the fine weather of the 'trades.' We were sound and seaworthy again! Outside the winds were fair and southerly. We had no excuse to lie swinging at single anchor. Jock Steel and his mates got their blessing, our 'lawin'' was paid and acquitted, and on a clear November morning we shook out the topsails and left Port William to the circling seabirds.

XX

UNDER THE FLAG

A BLACK, threatening sky, with heavy banks of indigo-tinted clouds massed about the sea-line. A sickly, greenish light high up in the zenith. Elsewhere the gloom of warring elements broken only by flashes of sheet lightning, vivid but noiseless. The sea, rolling up from the south-west in a long glassy swell, was ruffled here and there by the checks of a fitful breeze. It needed not a deadly low barometer to tell us of a coming storm; we saw it in the tiers of hard-edged fearsome clouds, breaking up and re-forming, bank upon bank, in endless figurations. Some opposing force was keeping the wind in check; there was conflict up there, for, though masses of detached cloud were breaking away and racing o'er the zenith, we held but a fitful gusty breeze, and our barque, under low sail, was lurching uneasily for want of a steady wind.

It was a morning of ill-omen, and the darkling sky but reflected the gloom of our faces; our thoughts were in keeping with the day, for we

had lost a shipmate, one among us was gone, Old Martin was dead.

He died sometime in the middle watch, no one knew when. He was awake when the watch came below at midnight, for Welsh John had given him matches for his pipe before turning in. That was the last, for when they were called at four, Martin was cold and quiet. There was no trouble on his face, no sign of pain or suffering. Belike the old man had put his pipe aside, and finding no shipmate awake to 'pass the word,' had gently claimed his Pilot.

There was no great show of grief when it was known. Perhaps a bit catch in the voice when speaking of it, an unusual gentleness in our manner towards one another, but no resemblance of mourning, no shadow of woe. His was no young life untimely ended, there was no accident to be discussed, no blame to be apportioned. It was just that the old lamp had flickered out at last. Ours was a sense of loss, we had lost a shipmate. There would be another empty bunk in the fo'cas'le, a hand less at the halyards, a name passed over at muster; we would miss the voice of experience that carried so much weight in our affairs—an influence was gone.

At daybreak we stood around to have a last look at the strong old face we had known so long.

The sailmaker was sewing him up in the clew of an old topsail, a sailorly shroud that Martin would have chosen. The office was done gently and soberly, as a shipmate has a right to expect. A few pieces of old chain were put in to weight him down, all shipshape and sailor-fashion, and when it was done we laid him out on the main hatch with the Flag he had served cast over him.

"There goes a good sailorman," said one of the crowd; "'e knowed 'is work," said another.

"A good sailorman—'e knowed 'is work!" That was Martin's epitaph—more, he would not want.

His was no long illness. A chill had settled into bronchitis. Martin had ever a fine disregard for weatherly precautions; he had to live up to the name of a 'hard case.' Fits of coughing and a high temperature came on him, and he was ordered below. At first he was taken aft to a spare room, but the unaccustomed luxury of the cabin so told on him that when he begged to be put in the fo'cas'le again, the Old Man let him go. There he seemed to get better. He had his shipmates to talk to; he was even in a position to rebuke the voice of youth and inexperience when occasion required, though with but a shadow of his former vehemence. Though he knew it would hurt him, he would smoke his pipe; it seemed to

afford him a measure of relief. The Old Man did what he could for him, and spent more time in the fo'-cas'le than most masters would have done. Not much could be done, for a ship is ill-fitted for an ailing man. At times there were relapses; times when his breathing would become laboured. Sometimes he became delirious and raved of old ships, and storms, and sails, then he would recover, and even seemed to get better. Then came the end. The tough old frame could no longer stand the strain, and he passed off quietly in the silence of middle night.

He was an old man, none knew how old. The kindly clerks in the shipping office had copied from one discharge note to the other when 'signing him on,' and he stood at fifty-eight on our articles as he had stood on other ship's books for perhaps ten or fifteen years; at sixty, he would never have got a 'sight.' He talked of old ships long since vanished from the face of the waters; if he had served on these he must have been over seventy years. Sometimes, but only to favoured shipmates, he would tell of his service aboard a Yankee cruiser when Fort Sumter fell, but he took greater pride in having been bo'sun of the famous *Sovereign of the Seas*.

"Three hundred an' seventy miles," he would say; "that wos 'er day's travellin'! That's wot Ah calls sailin' a ship. None o' yer damn 'clew

up an' clew down,' but give 'er th' ruddy canvas an'—let 'er go, boys!"

He was of the old type, bred in a hard sea-school. One of his boasts was that he had sailed for five years in packet ships, 'an' never saw th' pay table.' He would 'sign on' at Liverpool, giving his boarding-master a month's advance note for quittance. At New York he would desert, and after a bout ashore would sail for Liverpool in a new ship. There was a reason for this seeming foolish way of doing.

"None o' yer slavin' at harbour jobs an' cargo work; not fer me, me sons! Ah was a sailorman an' did only sailarin' jobs. Them was th' days w'en sailormen was men, an' no ruddy cargo-wrastlin', coal-diggin' scallywags, wot they be now!"

A great upholder of the rights of the fo'cas'le, he looked on the Mates as his natural enemies, and though he did his work, and did it well, he never let pass an opportunity of trying a Mate's temper by outspoken criticism of the Officers' way of handling ship or sail. Apprentices he bore with, though he was always suspicious of a cabin influence.

That was Martin, our gallantly truculent, overbearing Old Martin; and, as we looked on the motionless figure outlined by folds of the Flag,

we thought with regret of the time we took a pleasure in rousing him to a burst of sailorly invective. Whistling about the decks, or flying past him in the rigging with a great shaking of the shrouds when the 'crowd' was laying aloft to hand sail. "Come on, old 'has-been'!" Jones once shouted to him as he clambered over the futtock shrouds. Martin was furious.

"Has-been," he shouted in reply. "Aye, mebbe a 'has-been,' but w'en ye comes to my time o' life, young cock, ye can call yerself a 'never-bloody-wos'!"

Well! His watch was up, and when the black, ragged clouds broke away from the sou'-west and roused the sea against us, we would be one less to face it, and he would have rest till the great call of 'all hands'; rest below the heaving water that had borne him so long.

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Surely there is nothing more solemn than a burial at sea. Ashore there are familiar landmarks, the nearness of the haunts of men, the neighbourly headstones, the great company of the dead, to take from the loneliness of the grave. Here was nothing but a heaving ship on the immensity of mid-ocean, an open gangway, a figure shrouded in folds of a Flag, and a small knot of

bare-headed men, bent and swaying to meet the lurches of the vessel, grouped about the simple bier. The wind had increased and there was an ominous harping among the backstays. The ship was heaving unsteadily, and it was with difficulty we could keep a balance on the wet, sloping deck. Overhead the sky was black with the wrack of hurrying clouds, and the sullen grey water around us was already white-topped by the bite of freshening wind.

"I am th' Resurrection an' the Life, saith th' Loard"—Martin, laid on a slanted hatch, was ready for the road, and we were mustered around the open gangway. The Old Man was reading the service in his homely Doric, and it lost nothing of beauty or dignity in the translation—"an' whosoever liveth an' believeth in me sall never die." He paused and glanced anxiously to windward. There was a deadly check in the wind, and rain had commenced to fall in large, heavy drops. "A hand t' th' tops'l halyards, Mister," quietly, then continuing, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, an' that He sall stand at th' latter day upon th' airth. An' though . . . yet in my flesh sall I see Goad. . . ." Overhead, the sails were thrashing back and fore, for want of the breeze—still fell the rain, lashing heavily now on us and on

the shrouded figure, face up, that heeded it not.

Hurriedly the Old Man continued the service—"Foreasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty Goad of his gre—at merrcy t' take unto Himself th' so-al of oor de-ar brother, here departed, we therefore commit he's boady t' th' deep . . . when th' sea sall give up her daid, an' th' life of th' worl-d t' come, through oor Loard, Jesus Christ."

At a sign, the Second Mate tilted the hatch, the two youngest boys held the Flag, and Martin, slipping from its folds, took the water feet first in a sullen, almost noiseless, plunge.

"Oor Father which airt in heaven"—with bent head the Old Man finished the service. He was plainly ill at ease. He felt that the weather was 'making' on him, that the absence from the post of command (the narrow space between wheel and binnacle) was ill-timed. Still, his sense of duty made him read the service to a finish, and it was with evident relief he closed the book, saying. "Amen! Haul th' mains'l up, Mister, an' stand by t' square mainyards! . . . Keep th' watch on deck; it's 'all hands'—thon," pointing to the black murk spreading swiftly over the weather sky.

We dragged the wet and heavy mains'l to the

yard and stood by, waiting for the wind. Fitful gusts came, driving the rain in savage, searching bursts; then would come a deadly lull, and the rain beating on us, straight from above—a pitiless downpour. It was bitter cold, we were drenched and depressed as we stood shivering at the braces, and we wished for the wind to come, to get it over; anything would be better than this inaction.

A gust came out of the sou'-west, and we had but squared the yards when we heard the sound of a master wind on the water.

Shrieking with fury long withheld, the squall was upon us. We felt the ship stagger to the first of the blast; a furious plunge and she was off—smoking through the white-lashed sea, feather-driven before the gale. It could not last; no fabric would stand to such a race. “Lower away tops’l halyards!” yelled the Old Man, his voice scarce audible in the shrilling of the squall. The bo’sun, at the halyards, had but started the yard when the sheet parted; instant, the sail was in ribbons, thrashing savagely adown the wind. It was the test for the weakest link, and the squall had found it, but our spars were safe to us, and, eased of the press, we ran still swiftly on. We set about securing the gear, and in action we gave

little thought to the event that had marked our day; but there was that in the shriek of wind in the rigging, in the crash of sundered seas under the bows, in the cries of men at the downhauls and the thundering of the torn canvas that sang fitting Requiem for the passing of our aged mariner.

XXI

DOLDRUMS

“**L**EE fore-brace!”

Mister M‘Kellar stepped from the poop and cast off the brace coils with an air of impatience. It wanted but half an hour of ‘knocking off time’—and that half-hour would be time enough for his watch to finish the scraping of the deck-house—but the wind waits on no man, and already the weather clew of the mainsail was lifting lazily to a shift. It was hard to give up the prospect of having the house all finished and ship-shape before the Mate came on deck (and then trimming yards and sail after the *work* was done); but here was the wind working light into the eastward, and the sails nearly aback, and any minute might bring the Old Man on deck to inquire, with vehemence, “What the —— somebody was doing with the ship?” There was nothing else for it; the house would have to stand.

“*T—’t*, lee-fore-brace, the watch there!” Buckets and scrapers were thrown aside, the watch mustered at the braces, and the yards were swung

slowly forward, the sails lifting to a faint head air.

This was the last of the south-east trades, a clean-running breeze that had carried us up from 20° S., and brace and sheet blocks, rudely awakened from their three weeks' rest, creaked a long-drawn protest to the failing wind; ropes, dry with disuse, ran stiffly over the sheaves, and the cries of the men at the braces added the human note to a chorus of ship sounds that marked the end of steady sailing weather.

"*He—o—ro*, round 'm in, me sons; *ho—io—io*—lay-back-an'-get-*yer-muscle-up-fer* ghostin' through th' doldrums!" Roused by the song (broad hints and deep-sea pleasantries) of the chanteyman, the Old Man came on deck, and paced slowly up and down the poop, whistling softly for wind, and glancing expectantly around the horizon. Whistle as he might, there was no wisp of stirring cloud, no ruffling of the water, to meet his gaze, and already the sea was glassing over, deserted by the wind. Soon what airs there were died away, leaving us flat becalmed, all signs of movement vanished from the face of the ocean, and we lay, mirrored sharply in the windless, silent sea, under the broad glare of an equatorial sun.

For a space of time we were condemned to a seaman's purgatory; we had entered the 'dol-

drums,' that strip of baffling weather that lies between the trade winds. We would have some days of calm and heavy rains, sudden squalls and shifting winds, and a fierce overhead sun; and through it all there would be hard labour for our crew (weak and short-handed as we were), incessant hauling of the heavy yards, and trimming of sail. Night or day, every faint breath of wind a-stirring, every shadow on the water, must find our sail in trim for but a flutter of the canvas that would move us on; any course with north in it would serve. "Drive her or drift her," by hard work only could we hope to win into the steady trade winds again, into the gallant sailing weather when you touch neither brace nor sheet from sunset to sunrise.

Overhead the sails hung straight from the headropes, with not even a flutter to send a welcome draught to the sweltering deck below. Everywhere was a smell of blistering paint and molten pitch, for the sun, all day blazing on our iron sides, had heated the hull like a furnace wall. Time and again we sluiced the decks, but still pitch oozed from the gaping seams to blister our naked feet, and the moisture dried from the scorched planking almost as quickly as we could draw the water. We waited for relief at sundown, and hoped for a tropical downpour to put us to rights.

Far to the horizon the sea spread out in a glassy stillness, broken only by an occasional movement among the fish. A widening ring would mark a rise—followed by the quick, affrighted flutter of a shoal of flying fish; then the dolphin, darting in eager pursuit, the sun's rays striking on their glistening sides at each leap and flurry. A few sharp seconds of glorious action, then silence, and the level sea stretching out unbroken to the track of the westing sun.

Gasping for a breath of cooler air, we watched the sun go down, but there was no sign of wind, no promise of movement in the faint, vapoury cirrus that attended his setting.

Ten days of calms (blazing sun or a torrent of rain) and a few faint airs in the night time—and we had gained by a hundred miles. 'Our smart passage,' that we had hoped for when winds were fair and fresh, was out of question; but deep-sea philosophy has a counter for every occasion, and when the wind headed us or failed, someone among us would surely say, "Well, wot's th' odds, anyway? More bloomin' days, more bloomin' dollars, ain't it?" Small comfort this to the Old Man, who was now in the vilest of tempers, and spent his days in cursing the idle steersman, and

his nights in quarrelling with the Mates about the trim. If the yards were sharp up, it would be, "What are ye thinkin' about, Mister? Get these yards braced in, an' look damn smart about it!" If they were squared, nothing would do but they must be braced forward, where the sails hung straight down, motionless, as before. Everything and everybody was wrong, and the empty grog bottles went '*plomp*' out of the stern ports with unusual frequency. When we were outward bound, the baffling winds that we met off Cape Horn found him calm enough; they were to be expected in that quarter, and in the stir and action of working the ship in high winds, he could forget any vexation he might have felt; but this was different, there was the delay at the Falklands, and here was a further check to the passage—a hundred miles in ten days—provisions running short, grass a foot long on the counter, and still no sign of wind. There would be no congratulatory letter from the owners at the end of this voyage, no kindly commending phrase that means so much to a shipmaster. Instead it would be, "We are at a loss to understand why you have not made a more expeditious passage, considering that the *Elsinora*, which sailed," etc., etc. It is always a fair wind in the owner's private office! It was

maddening to think of. "Ten miles a day!" Old Jock stamped up and down the poop, snarling at all and sundry. To the steersman it was, "Blast ye, what are ye lookin' round for? Keep yer eye on th' royals, you!" The Mates fared but little better. "Here, Mister," he would shout; "what's th' crowd idlin' about for? Can't ye find no work t' do? D'ye want me t' come and roust them around? It isn't much use o' me keepin' a dog, an' havin' t' bark myself!"

It was a trying time. If the Old Man 'roughed' the Mates, the Mates 'roughed' us, and rough it was. All hands were 'on the raw,' and matters looked ugly between the men and Officers, and who knows what would have happened, had not the eleventh day brought the wind.

It came in the middle watch, a gentle air, that lifted the canvas and set the reef points drumming and dancing at each welcome flutter, and all our truculence and ill-temper vanished with the foam bubbles that rose under our moving fore-foot.

The night had fallen dark and windless as any, and the first watch held a record for hauling yards and changing sheets. "'Ere ye are, boys," was the call at eight bells. "Out ye comes, an' swigs them b——y yards round; windmill tattics, an'

th' Old Man 'owlin' like a dancin' —— dervish on th' lid!" The Old Man had been at the bottle, and was more than usually quarrelsome; two men were sent from the wheel for daring to spit over the quarter, and M'Kellar was on a verge of tears at some coarse-worded aspersion on his seamanship. The middle watch began ill. When the wind came we thought it the usual fluke that would last but a minute or two, and then, "mains'l up, an' square mainyards, ye idle hounds!" But no, three bells, four bells, five, the wind still held, the water was ruffling up to windward, the ship leaning handsomely; there was the welcome heave of a swell running under.

So the watch passed. There were no more angry words from the poop. Instead, the Old Man paced to and fro, rubbing his hands in high good humour, and calling the steersman "m' lad" when he had occasion to con the vessel. After seeing that every foot of canvas was drawing, he went below, and the Second Mate took his place on the weather side, thought things over, and concluded that Old Jock wasn't such a bad sort, after all. We lay about the decks, awaiting further orders. None came, and we could talk of winds and passages, or lie flat on our backs staring up at the gently swaying trucks, watching the soft

clouds racing over the zenith; there would be a spanking breeze by daylight. A bell was struck forward in the darkness, and the 'look-out' chanted a long "Awl—'s well!"

All was, indeed, well; we had picked up the north-east trades.

XXII

ON SUNDAY

SUNDAY is the day when ships are sailed in fine style. On week days, when the round of work goes on, a baggy topsail or an ill-trimmed yard may stand till sundown, till the *work* be done, but Sunday is sacred to keen sailing; a day of grace, when every rope must be a-taut-o, and the lifts tended, and the Mates strut the weather poop, thinking at every turn of suitable manœuvres and sail drill that will keep the sailormen from wearying on this, their Day of Rest.

On a fine Sunday afternoon we lay at ease awaiting the Mate's next discovery in the field of progress. She was doing well, six knots or seven, every stitch of sail set and drawing to a steady wind. From under the bows came the pleasing *thrush* of the broken water, from aloft the creak of block and cordage and the sound of wind against the canvas. For over an hour we had been sweating at sheets and halyards, the customary Sunday afternoon service, and if the *Florence*, of Glasgow, wasn't doing her best it was no fault of ours.

Now it was, "That'll do, the watch!" and we were each following our Sunday beat.

Spectacled and serious, 'Sails' was spelling out the advertisements on a back page of an old *Home Notes*; the two Dutchmen were following his words with attentive interest. The Dagos, after the manner of their kind, were polishing up their knives, and the 'white men' were brushing and airing their 'longshore togs,' in readiness for a day that the gallant breeze was bringing nearer. A scene of peaceful idling.

"As shair's daith, he's gotten his e'e on that fore-tops'l sheet. Ah telt ye; Ah telt ye!" Houston was looking aft. "Spit oan yer hauns, lauds! He's seen it. We're gaun tae ha'e anither bit prayer for th' owners!"

The Mate had come off the poop, and was standing amidships staring steadily aloft.

"Keep 'oor eyes off that tops'l sheet, I tell 'oo," said Welsh John angrily. "He can't see it unless he comes forra'd; if he sees 'oo lookin', it's forra'd he'll be, soon, indeed!"

There were perhaps a couple of links of slack in the tops'l sheet, a small matter, but quite enough to call for the watch tackle—on a Sunday. The crisis passed; it was a small matter on the main that had called him down, and soon a 'prentice boy was mounting the rigging with ropeyarns in

his hand, to tell the buntlines what he thought of them—and of the Mate.

Bo'sun Hicks was finishing off a pair of 'shackles,' sailor handles for Munro's sea-chest—a simple bit of recreation for a Sunday afternoon. They were elaborate affairs of four stranded 'turks-heads' and double rose knots, and showed several distinct varieties of 'coach whipping.' One that was finished was being passed round an admiring circle of shipmates, and Hicks, working at the other, was feigning a great indifference to their criticisms of his work.

"Di—zy, Di—zy, gimme yer awnswer, do," he sang with feeling, as he twisted the pliant yarns.

"Mind ye, 'm not sayin' as them ain't fine shackles"—Granger was ever the one to strike a jarring note—"As fine a shackles as ever I see; but there was a Dutchman, wot I was shipmates with in th' *Ruddy-mantus*, o' London, as *could* turn 'em out! Wire 'earts, 'e made 'em, an' stuffin', an' made up o' round sinnet an' dimon' 'itchin'! Prime! W'y! Look a here! If ye was t' see one ov 'is shackles on th' hend ov a chest—all painted up an' smooth like—ye couldn't 'elp a liftin' ov it, jest t' try th' grip; an' it 'ud come nat'ral t' th' 'and, jes' like a good knife. Them wos shackles as 'e made, an'——"

“Ho, yus! Shackles, wos they? An’ them ain’t no shackles wot ’m a-finishin’ of? No bloom-in’ fear! Them’s garters f’r bally dancers, ain’t they? Or nose rings for Sullimans, or——, or——. ’Ere!” Hicks threw aside the unfinished shackle and advanced threateningly on his critic.

“ ’Ere! ’Oo th’ ’ell are ye gettin’ at, anywye? D’ye siy as I cawn’t make as good a shackles as any bloomin’ Dutchman wot ever said *yaw* f’r yes? An’ yer *Ruddy-mantus*, o’ London? I knows yer *Ruddy-bloomin-mantus*, o’ London! Never ’ad a sailorman acrost ’er fo’cas’le door! Men wot knowed their work wouldn’t sail in ’er, anyhow, an’ w’en she tided out at Gravesen’, all th’ stiffs out o’ th’ ’ard-up boardin’-’ouses wos windin’ ’er bloomin’ keeleg up! *Ruddymantus*? ’Er wot ’ad a bow like the side o’ ’n ’ouse—comin’ up th’ Mersey Channel a-shovin’ th’ sea afore ’er, an’ makin’ ’igh water at Liverpool two hours afore th’ Halmanack! That’s yer *Ruddy-mantus*! An’ wot th’ ’ell d’you know ’bout sailorizin’, anywye? Yer never wos in a proper ship till ye come ’ere, on a dead ’un’s discharge, an’ ye couldn’t put dimon’ ’itchin’ on a broom ’andle, if it wos t’ get ye a pension!”

Here was a break to our peaceful Sunday afternoon; nothing short of a round or two could set

matters fair after such an insult to a man's last ship!

Someone tried to pacify the indignant bo'sun.

" 'Ere, bo'sun! Wot's about it if 'e did know a blanky Dutchman wot made shackles? Them o' yourn's good enough. I don't see nuthin' th' matter wi' them!"

"No—no! A-course ye don't, 'cos ye'r like that b——y Granger there, ye knows damn all 'bout sailorizin' anywye! Didn't ye 'ear 'im say as I couldn't make shackles?"

A chorus of denials, a babel of confused explanation.

"A-course 'e did," shouted the maker of shackles. "'E sed as I didn't know 'ow t' work round sennit an' dimon' 'itchin', as I was never in a proper ship afore, as 'e knowed a bloomin' Dutchman wot could make better shackles nor me; sed as 'ow my shackles worn't fit f'r a grip——"

" 'Ere! 'Ere!! bo'sun—I never sed nuthin' ov th' kind!" The unfortunate Granger was bowing to the blast. "Wot I sed wos, 'ow them was good shackles; as fine a shackles as ever I see—an' I was only tellin' my mates 'ere 'bout a Dutchman wot was in th' *Ruddymanthus* along o' me as could make 'em as smooth to the 'and ——"

"An' wot's the matter wi' them?" Hicks

picked up the discarded shackle and threw it at Granger, striking him smartly on the chest. "Ain't them smooth enough for yer lubberly 'an's, ye long-eared son of a——"

"Fore-tops'l sheet, the watch there!!"

The Mate had seen the slack links and the row in progress at the same moment. The order came in time; strife was averted.

Three sulky pulls at a tackle on the sheets, a tightening of the braces, then: "That'll do, the watch there! Coil down and put away the tackle!" Again the gathering at the fore-hatch. Hicks picked up his work and resumed the twisting of the yarns.

A great knocking out and refilling of pipes.

"'Bout that 'ere Dutchman, Granger? 'Im wot ye wos shipmates with."

Granger glanced covertly at the bo'sun. There was no sign of further hostilities; he was working the yarns with a great show of industry, and was whistling dolefully the while.

"Well, 'e worn't a proper Dutchman, neither," he began pleasantly; "'im bein' married on a white woman in Cardiff, wot 'ad a shop in Bute Road. See? Th' Ole Man o' th' *Ruddymanthus*, 'e wos a terror on sailorizin'——" Granger paused. Again a squint at the bo'sun. There was no sign, save that the whistling had ceased,

and the lips had taken a scornful turn. “ ‘E was a terror on sailorizin’, an’ w’en we left Sydney f’r London, ’e said as ’ow ’e’d give two pun’ fer th’ best pair o’ shackles wot ’is men could make. There worn’t many o’ us as wor ’ands at shackles, an’ there wor only th’ Dutchman an’ a white man in it—a Cockney ’e was, name o’ Linnet——”

The bo’sun was staring steadily at the speaker, who added hastily, “ ‘an a damn good feller ’e was, too, one o’ th’ best I ever was shipmates with; ’e was a prime sailorman—there worn’t many as could teach ’im anythin’——”

Bo’sun had resumed work, and was again whistling.

“It lay a-tween ’im an’ this ’ere Dutchman. All the w’yage they was at it. They was in dif’rent watches, an’ th’ other fellers was allus a-settin’ ’em up. It would be, ‘ ‘Ere, Dutchy, you min’ yer eye. Linnet, ’e’s got a new turn o’ threads jes’ below th’ rose knots’; or, ‘Look-a-here, Linnet, me son, that Dutchman’s puttin’ in glossy beads, an’ ’e’s waxin’ ’is ends wi’ stuff wot th’ stooard giv’ ’im.’ The watches was takin’ sides. ‘Linnet’s th’ man,’ says th’ Mate’s watch. ‘Dutchy, he’s th’ fine ’and at sailorizin’,’ says th’ starbow-lines. Worn’t takin’ no sides meself”—a side glance at the bo’sun—“me bein’ ’andy man along o’ th’ carpenter, an’ workin’ all day.”

The bo'sun put away his unfinished work, and, lighting his pipe—a sign of satisfaction—drew nearer to the group.

“Off th’ Western Islands they finished their jobs,” continued Granger (confidently, now that the bo'sun had lit a pipe and was listening as a shipmate ought). “They painted ’em, an’ ’ung ’em up t’ dry. Fine they looked, dark green, an’ th’ rose knots all w’ite. Dutchy’s shackles was werry narrer; worn’t made f’r a sailorman’s ’and at all, but ’e knowed wot ’e was a-doin’ of, for th’ Ole Man was one o’ them dandy blokes wot sails out o’ London; ’an’s like a lidye’s ’e ’ad, an’ w’en they takes their shackles aft, ’e cottons t’ Dutchy’s at onest. ‘Now, them’s wot I calls shackles, Johnson, me man,’ sez ’e. ‘Jest fits me ’and like a glove,’ ’e sez, ’oldin ov ’em up, an’ lettin’ ’em fall back an’ forrard acrost ’is wrist. ‘Linnet’s is too broad,’ ’e sez. ‘Good work, hexellint work,’ ’e sez, ‘but too broad for th’ ’ands.’ Linnet, ’e sed as ’ow ’e made shackles for sailormen’s ’ands; sed ’e didn’t ’old wi’ Captains ’andlin’ their own sea-chests, but it worn’t no use—Dutchy got th’ two quid, an’ th’ stooard got cramp ov ’is ’ands hevery time ’e took out th’ Ole Man’s chest ov a mornin’. An’ th’ Mate giv’ Linnet five bob an’ an ole pair o’ sea-boots f’r

'is pair, an' cheap they wos, for Linnet, 'e wos a man wot knowed 'is work."

"A Mate's th' best judge ov a sailorman's work, anywy," said the bo'sun pleasantly.

"'Im? 'E wor a good judge, too," said the wily Granger. "'E said as 'ow Linnet's wos out-an-out th' best pair. I knowed they wos, for them Dutchmen ain't so 'andy at double rose knots as a white man!"

"No! Sure they ain't!"

XXIII

A STEP UP

TWELVE to one is the Official Hour. In it the ship's position is argued and plotted on the chart, the course is set for the day to follow, ship work is discussed and arranged,—sometimes the blue Log Book is brought out and an entry made setting a penalty to some breach of duty. Shortly before noon by the clock, Old Jock comes on deck with his sextant in hand to make 'eight bells.' If the weather is fine and clear, he may take leisurely glances through the eyepiece of his instrument, noting carefully the increase in altitude as the sun climbs steadily to the meridian. On such a day, there is time and enough between observations to stride a pace or two on the poop, to cover the sail area with a searching eye, perhaps to pass a word with the Mate about the prospects of the voyage. That is all simple work; but when the sky is overcast or cloudy and the sun peeps rarely, there is less license for such 'jack-easy' movements: the flat top of the companion-way then becomes the Old Man's fixed station. There he sits, with his eyes on the cloudy masses to note a shelf between

the windward banks that may open, later on, to a brief glimpse of the sun. At every brightening in the lift, the sextant goes to his eye,—to be held steadily for a space or lowered sharply in a gesture of impatience. The Mate,—who shares these rites,—is much less concerned to capture and measure each short ray of sunlight. *He* makes no painstaking task of the noon observations: it is easily seen that the navigation of the ship is not his special interest. Chance and again, he misses an opportunity for contact: a pucker in the cloths of a topsail takes his eye, an uncoiled gasket aloft requires attention, or Hansen,—straightening his back to relieve the strain of a bending job,—must needs be spoken to “*Hi!* Get on with th’ *work*, ye loafing sojer! Gad! I can’t take my eyes off you men for a minnit!”

On the seventeenth January, the sun was working up through banks of westerly cloud. Occasional patches of hard blue sky showed through between the rifts. We held the finest sailing breeze of the passage,—a brisk beam wind that drew every sheet in the barque, set a flashing bone in her teeth, and left a clean dancing wake astern,—a straight track to where, two days ago, we had seen the blue outline of Flores of the Western Islands, dim, on the eastern horizon. To put such fine sailing on clear record was important, and the

Old Man was early on deck to take his meridian sight. In fine humour, tapping his heels a merry jig, chuckling, he kept post on the companion-way,—now and then wiping the object glass of his sextant lest he should lose a mile by dim reflection.

We had reached that stage on the voyage where our earnest employment called for considerable thought on the part of the mates. The long period at sea had already exhausted the routine of ship work. Instead of paragraphs of detailed operations in his log-book,—the overhaul of the rigging, painting of masts and spars and tackle blocks, sail shifting and repair,—the Mate was reduced to such terse entries as ‘Hands variously employed’ or ‘Shipwork as requisite.’ He could not very well encumber his document by reciting the paint pots scraped and cleaned, the wood cut for galley use, hours spent in drawing canvas threads to make swabs for the paintwork, time passed at the brasswork with sifted ashes and foul smelling shark-oil. (We had no dainty polish in our hard-case barque.) Variety was set out for our employment at every change of the watch: small work—finishing touches to the long ‘all hands’ days of upkeep and cleaning and painting that had busied us since the heavy sailing days off the Horn. On this day of good going, the watch was put to holystoning the maindeck,—

back-breaking work with water and sand and stones. It had been done before, and a coating of oil spread on the planking to preserve the wood, but mysterious markings had come through and the Mate was concerned that we should come to port with no such stains for the owner's clerk to poke his umbrella at. "Getting the Mate his promotion," we said, as we sluiced the decks, scattered sand, and dragged the heavy tombstone fore and aft!

Our work kept us too far from the poop to hear all that passed between Old Jock and the Mate as they stood by for the sun to come through. We missed the little remarks,—items of course and distance, latitude and longitude, winds, tides, pilots and tugboats,—from which we could weave a fairly accurate thread of the progress of the voyage, even down to the date when we might expect to close the land. This was unfortunate, but we had a spy on the ground. Munro, cleaning brasswork on the poop, had his instructions, and it was with satisfaction we noted the way he reserved the polishing of the skylight brasses to the right moment. If we could only trust his memory!

Almost on broad noon, the sun came through. It seemed as though it had been capering to Old Jock's jolly humour,—laying aside the game of hide-and-seek to grin finely at conclusion of the jest. A good contact! The Old Man lowers his

instrument decisively, places it in a safe crutch of the deckwork, to draw and consult a massive timepiece. There is a word or two with the Mate about the altitude, then,—with a curt gesture,—he sets the day in its place. “Make eight bells,” he says!

Munro had all the information when he came to the half-deck to join us at our meal. The day’s run would be about 240 miles: if the breeze held fair, we would be in Falmouth in three days: there was some talk of making soundings on the Little Sole Bank: the Mate was told to rouse and range the anchor cables to-morrow: a new fish-tackle was to be rove off: the Old Man had ordered Niven to give us a further allowance of corned beef: our dole of fresh water was to be increased. All of it was matter to be examined and discussed on every bearing. Such fine homeward-bound talk we made of it! Argument about the Great Sole and the Little Sole,—the time o’ day we would look to meet the fishermen on their banks,—the distance we ought to pass off Ushant,—the colour of the lights on the coast,—the cruising grounds of the Channel pilots. Fine talk! Only Grainger,—slipping from forward to learn the news,—put in a jarring note by his doubts of the wind holding fair.

In the midst of our busy clatter, a hail from the

poop set every ear a-cock. The Mate had come up from below after working out his observations. "Pass th' word," he roared. "Mister Hansen t' lay aft!"

Mister? He said *Mister* Hansen! Wondering, we turned to our shipmate. He was obviously ill at ease; somewhat red of face. "Oh, I d'nno," he said in answer to our unneeded enquiry. ". . . expect it's something t' do with my time being out. Think my 'prenti'ship is up to-day. Seventeenth, a'nt it?" He laid down his knife and pannikin, put on a jacket which he buttoned carefully, and stepped out on deck.

There was silence in the half-deck after he left. This was too big for noisy chatter. We had thoughts,—thoughts of the day when our time would be up, when we too would button our jackets and go aft. Jones of the other watch came in; someone told him why Hansen had laid aft in his watch below. He looked curiously at our man stepping quietly to the poop; perhaps wondered why he did not run. Hansen was his senior by no more than a fortnight or three weeks, but there was no envy in his eyes as he looked.

It was never difficult to dodge the Second Mate. Perhaps Mr. McKellar had a kindly blind eye for brassbounders; he was not so very long out of his time himself. A little while after Hansen had

gone below to the cabin, I slipped on to the poop. The skylight was handily a-jar: there was room to peep at the doings below. At the long table sat Old Jock with the Articles of the Ship open in front of him. The Mate sat with him, his chin in his hand, eyeing the newly nervous Hansen who stood awkwardly under such regard. Old Niven was laying plates on a white tablecloth at the far end. Something had been said and Hansen was answering inaudibly. "Speak up," said Old Jock. "Dammit, ye'er a man, noo! . . . it's only for a maitter o' ten days—mebbe a month, but it'll help ye wher ye'er gaun' up t' pass. How d'ye stan' wi' ye'er navigation, eh?" The Mate said something and Old Jock looked pleased. "Ah weel," he said, turning the open page of the Articles towards where Hansen stood. "Sign here. Th' wages 'll be fower pun' a month."

Our new Third Mate said little when he returned to the half-deck. His unfinished dinner lay on the table. Habit made him pick up his knife and pan-nikin, but remembering that he was now an officer, he put them down quietly. We were all a little irritated at the cool way he took his promotion. A *whoop* and a howl would have been the right way, we thought,—not this slow setting of things in their place. Even word of the changes in the watch had to be dragged from him. "Oh, yes,"

he said. "I'm for th' Second Mate's watch: th' Mate wants t' keep th' bos'n in his. . . . *Umm*. I'm t' shift my gear aft t' th' vacant bunk in th' Second's room. . . . N'no. He didn't say anything 'bout my comin' back next voyage."

At the sorting and packing of his clothes and bedding, some few items changed hands. He swopped a working cap for a uniform peaked one and threw in his sailor's sheathknife and the belt as makeweight. Paint besmeared overalls he discarded as not being officer's kit. Young Munro got a gift of what remained of his week's allowance of sugar and butter. All fair!

We helped him to carry his gear aft and lingered, curiously inclined, to have a look around his new berth. Eccles stole copper tacks from the carpenter for Hansen to fix up his home photographs beside the one of Mr. McKellar's girl. There was no great to-do when we parted. At four bells of our watch below, we left our shipmate in his glory and returned to our dingy quarter in the half-deck. We felt the loss of our companion keenly. The stark woodwork of the bunk he had so often turned into seemed to make itself distressfully plain. Eccles put a rug over the bare boards.

"I d'nno," he said, ". . . I shouldn't be surprised if *Old* Hansen don't like this shiftin' about any more than we do."

On the following day the watch was heaving up and ranging the anchor cables. Our men had made a good start at it in the morning, but there was still fathom after fathom of heavy rusted cable to be roused from its long rest in the chain locker and placed in tiers on the deck. The Second Mate's watch, still slightly weaker than the Mate's, was making heavy work of it as I went forward to the galley to draw dinner for my mates below. Hansen had charge of the 'jigger' party whose job it was to man the tackles. As I counted the ranges to learn how much there would be for us to heave up in the afternoon watch Hansen let out a roar,—

“*Hi* you there, Dago Joe! Get on with th' *work*, ye loafing sojer! Gad! I can't take my eyes off you men for a minnit!”

XXIV

A LANDFALL

IN the dark of the morning a dense fog had closed around us, shutting in our horizon when we had most need of a clear outlook. We had expected to sight the Lizard before dawn to pick up a Falmouth pilot at noon, to be anchored in the Roads by nightfall—we had it all planned out, even to the man who was to stand the first anchor-watch—and now, before the friendly gleam of the Lizard Lights had reached us, was fog—damp, chilling, dispiriting, a pall of white, clammy vapour that no cunning of seamanship could avail against.

Denser it grew, that deep, terrifying wall that shut us off, shipmate from shipmate. Overhead, only the black shadow of the lower sails loomed up; forward, the ship was shrouded ghostly, unreal. Trailing wreaths of vapour passed before and about the side-lamps, throwing back their glare in mockery of the useless rays. All sense of distance was taken from us: familiar deck fittings assumed huge, grotesque proportions; the blurred and shadowy outlines of listening men about the

decks seemed magnified and unreal. Sound, too, was distorted by the inconstant sea-fog; a whisper might carry far, a whole-voiced hail be but dimly heard.

Lifting lazily over the long swell, under easy canvas, we sailed, unseeing and unseen. Now and on, the hand fog-trumpet rasped out a signal of our sailing, a faint, half-stifled note to pit against the deep reverberation of a liner's siren that seemed, at every blast, to be drawing nearer and nearer.

The Old Man was on the poop, anxiously peering into the void, though keenest eyes could serve no purpose. Bare-headed, that he might the better hear, he stepped from rail to rail—listening, sniffing, striving, with every other sense acute, to work through the fog-banks that had robbed him of his sight. We were in evil case. A dense fog in Channel, full in the track of shipping—a weak wind for working ship. Small wonder that every whisper, every creak of block or parrel, caused him to jump to the compass—a steering order all but spoken.

“Where d’ye mark that, now?” he cried, as again the liner’s siren sounded out.

“Where d’ye mark . . . d’ye mark . . . mark?” The word was passed forward from mouth to mouth, in voices faint and muffled.

"About four points on th' port bow, Sir!" The cry sounded far and distant, like a hail from a passing ship, though the Mate was but shouting from the bows.

"Aye, aye! Stan' by t' hand that foresheet! Keep the foghorn goin'!"

" . . . Foresheet . . . 'sheet . . . th' fog'orn . . . goin'!" The invisible choir on the main-deck repeated the orders.

Again the deep bellow from the steamer, now perilously close—the futile rasp of our horn in answer.

Suddenly an alarmed cry: "O Chris'! She's into us! . . . The bell, you! The bell! . . ." A loud clanging of the forward bell, a united shout from our crew, patter of feet as they run aft, the Mate shouting: "Down hellum, Sir—down hellum f'r God's sake!"

"Hard down helm! Le' go foresheet!" answered to the Mate's cry, the Old Man himself wrenching desperately at the spokes of the wheel. Sharp ring of a metal sheave, hiss of a running rope, clank and throb of engines, thrashing of sails coming hard to the mast, shouts!

Out of the mist a huge shadowy hull ranges alongside, the wash from her sheering cutwater hissing and spluttering on our broadside.

Three quick, furious blasts of a siren, unintelli'

gible shouts from the steamer's bridge, a churning of propellers; foam; a waft of black smoke—then silence, the white, clammy veil again about us, and only the muffled throb of the liner's reversed engines and the uneasy lurch of our barque, now all aback, to tell of a tragedy averted.

"Oh! The murderin' ruffians! The b——y sojers!" The crisis over, the Old Man was beside himself with rage and indignation. "Full speed through weather like this! Blast ye!" he yelled, hollowing his hands. "What—ship—is—that?"

No answer came out of the fog. The throb of engines died away in a steady rhythm; they would be on their course again, 'slowed down,' perhaps, to twelve knots, now that the nerves of the officer of the watch had been shaken.

Slowly our barque was turned on heel, the yards trimmed to her former course, and we moved on, piercing the clammy barrier that lay between us and a landfall.

"Well, young fellers? Wha' d'ye think o' that now?" Bo'sun was the first of us to regain composure. "Goin' dead slow, worn't 'e? 'Bout fifteen, I sh'd siy! That's the wye wi' them mail-boat fellers: Monday, five 'undred mile; Toosd'y, four-ninety-nine; We'n'sd'y, four-ninety-height 'n 'arf—'slowed on haccount o' fog'—that's wot they puts it in 'er bloomin' log, blarst 'em!"

"Silence, there—main-deck!" The Old Man was pacing across the break of the poop, pausing to listen for sound of moving craft.

Bo'sun Hicks, though silenced, had yet a further lesson for us youngsters, who might one day be handling twenty-knot liners in such a fog. In the ghostly light of fog and breaking day he performed an uncanny pantomime, presenting a liner's officer, resplendent in collar and cuff, strutting, mincing, on a steamer's bridge. (Sailormen walk fore and aft; steamboat men, athwart.)

"Haw!" he seemed to say, though never a word passed his lips. "Haw! Them wind-jammers—ain't got no proper fog'orns. Couldn't 'ear 'em at th' back o' a moskiter-net! An' if we cawn't 'ear 'em, 'ow do we know they're there, haw! So we bumps 'em, an' serve 'em dem well right, haw!"

It was extraordinary! Here was a man who, a few minutes before, might, with all of us, have been struggling for his life!

Dawn broke and lightened the mist about us, but the pall hung thick as ever over the water. At times we could hear the distant note of a steamer's whistle; once we marked a sailing vessel, by sound of her horn, as she worked slowly across our bows, giving the three mournful wails of a running ship. Now and again we cast the lead, and it was

something to see the Channel bottom—grains of sand, broken shell-pebbles—brought up on the arming. Fog or no fog, we were, at least, dunting the ‘blue pigeon’ on English ground, and we felt, as day wore on and the fog thinned and turned to mist and rain, that a landfall was not yet beyond hope.

A change of weather was coming, a change that neither the Old Man nor the Mate liked, to judge by their frequent visits to the barometers. At noon the wind hauled into the sou’-west and freshened, white tops curled out of the mist and broke in a splutter of foam under the quarter, Channel gulls came screaming and circling high o’er our heads—a sure sign of windy weather. A gale was in the making; a rushing westerly gale, to clear the Channel and blow the fog-rack inland.

“I don’t like the looks o’ this, Mister.” The Old Man was growing anxious: we had seen nothing, had heard nothing to make us confident of our reckoning. “That aneroid’s dropped a tenth since I tapped it last, an’ th’ mercurial’s like it had no bottom! There’s wind behind this, sure; and if we see naught before ‘four bells,’ I’m goin’ out t’ look for sea-room. Channel fogs, an’ sou’-westers, an’ fifteen-knot liners in charge o’ b——y lunatics! Gad! there’s no room

in th' English Channel now for square sail, an' when ye——"

"Sail O! On the port bow, Sir!" Keen, homeward-bound eyes had sighted a smudge on the near horizon.

"Looks like a fisherman," said the Mate, screwing at his glasses. "He's standing out."

"Well, we'll haul up t' him, anyway," answered the Old Man. "Starboard a point—mebbe he can give us the bearin' o' th' Lizard."

Bearing up, we were soon within hailing distance. She was a Cardiff pilot cutter; C.F. and a number, painted black on her mains'l, showed us that. As we drew on she hoisted the red and white of a pilot on station.

"The barque—ahoy! Where—are—'oo—bound?" A cheering hail that brought all hands to the rails, to stare with interest at the oilskin-clad figures of the pilot's crew.

"Falmouth—for orders!"

"Ah!"—a disappointed note—" 'oo are standin' too far t' th' west'ard, Capt'in. I saw the Falmouth cutter under th' land, indeed, before the fog came down. Nor'-by-east—that'll fetch 'm!"

"Thank 'ee! How does the Lizard bear?"

" 'Bout nor'-nor'-west, nine mile, I sh'd say. Stand in—as—far—as—thirty-five—fathoms—no less!" The pilot's Channel voice carried far.

"Thank Heaven! That's definite, anyway," said the Old Man, turning to wave a hand towards the cutter, now fast merging into the mist astern. "Nor'-nor'-west, nine mile," he said. "That last sight of ours was a long way out. A good job I held by th' lead. Keep 'er as she's goin', Mister; I'll away down an' lay her off on th' chart—nor'-nor'-west, nine mile," he kept repeating as he went below, fearing a momentary forgetfulness.

In streaks and patches the mist was clearing before the westerling wind. To seaward we saw our neighbours of the fog setting on their ways. Few were standing out to sea, and that, and the sight of a fleet of fishermen running in to their ports, showed that no ordinary weather lay behind the fast-driving fog-wreaths. North of us heavy masses of vapour, banked by the breeze, showed where the land lay, but no land-mark, no feature of coast or headland, stood clear of the mist to guide us. Cautiously, bringing up to cast the lead at frequent intervals, we stood inshore, and darkness, falling early, found us a-lee of the land with the misty glare of the Lizard lights broad on our beam. Here we 'hove-to' to await a pilot—"Thirty-five fathoms, no less," the Welshman had advised—and the frequent glare of our blue-light signals showed the Old Man's impatience to be on his way again to Falmouth and shelter.

Eight we burnt, guttering to their sockets, before we saw an answering flare, and held away to meet the pilot. A league or so steady running, and then—to the wind again, the lights of a big cutter rising and falling in the sea-way, close a-lee.

“What—ship?” Not Stentor himself could have bettered the speaker’s hail.

“The *Florence*, of Glasgow: ‘Frisco t’ Channel. Have ye got my orders?”

A moment of suspense. Hull, it might be, or the Continent: the answer might set us off to sea again.

“No—not now! (We’re right—for Falmouth.) We had ’m a fortnight ago, but they’ve called in since. A long passage, surely, Captain?”

“Aye! A hundred an’ thirty-two days—not countin’ three week at th’ Falklan’s, under repair. . . . Collision with ice in fifty-five, south! . . . No proper trades either; an’ ‘doldrums’! . . . A long passage, Pilot!”

“Well, well! You’ve be goin’ on t’ Falmouth, I reckon—stan’ by t’ put a line in my boat!” A dinghy put off from the cutter; a frail cockleshell, lurching and diving in the short Channel sea, and soon our pilot was astride the rail, greeting us, as one sure of a welcome.

“You’ve jest in time, Capten. It’s goin’ t’ blow, I tell ’ee—(Mainyard forrard Mister Mate!)

—an' a West-countryman's allowance, for sure!" He rubbed his sea-scarred hands together, beamed jovially, as though a 'West-countryman's allowance' were pleasant fare. . . . "Th' glass started fallin' here about two—(Well—the mainyard!—a bit more o' th' lower tawps'l-brace, Mister!)—two o'clock yesterday afternoon—(How's the compass, Capten? Half a point! Keep 'er nor'-east b' nor', when she comes to it, m' lad!)—an' it's been droppin' steady ever since. Lot o' craft put in for shelter sin'—(Check in th' foreyards now, will 'ee?)—since th' marnin', an' the Carrick Roads 'll be like West India Dock on a wet Friday. A good job the fog's lifted. Gad! we had it thick this marnin'. We boarded a barque off th' Dodman. . . . Thought he was south o' the Lizard, he did, an' was steerin' nor'-east t' make Falmouth! A good job we sighted 'im, or he'd a bin—(Well—th' foreyard, Mister!)—hard upon th' Bizzie's Shoal, I reckon."

The look-out reported a light ahead.

"St. Ant'ny's, Capten," said our pilot. "Will 'ee give 'er th' main to'galns'l, an' we'll be gettin on?"

XXV

FALMOUTH FOR ORDERS

HIGH dawn broke on a scene of storm, on the waters of Falmouth Bay, white-lashed and curling, on great ragged storm-clouds racing feather-edged over the downs and wooded slopes that environ the fairest harbour of all England.

To us, so long habited to the lone outlook of sea and sky, the scene held much of interest, and, from the first grey break of morning, our eyes went a-roving over the windy prospect, seeing incident and novelty at every turn. In the great Bay, many ships lay anchored, head to wind, at straining cables. Laden ships with trim spars and rigging, red-rusty of hull, and lifting at every scend to the rough sea the foul green underbody of long voyaging; tall clippers, clean and freshly painted without, but showing, in disorder of gear and rigging, the mark of the hastily equipped outward bound; coasters, steam and sail, plunging and fretting at short anchor or riding to the swell in sheltered creeks; lumbermen, with high deck loads bleached and whitened by wind and salt-spume of a winter passage; drifters and pilot

cruisers, sea trawlers, banksmen—a gathering of many craft that the great west wind had turned to seek a shelter.

Riding with the fleet, we lay to double anchor. Overhead the high wind whistled eerily through spar and cordage—a furious blast that now and then caught up a crest of the broken harbour sea and flung the icy spray among us. Frequent squalls came down—rude bursts of wind and driving sleet that set the face of the harbour white-streaked under the lash, and shut out the near land in a shroud of wind-blown spindrift. To seaward, in the clearings, we could see the hurtling outer seas, turned from the sou'-west, shattering in a high column of broken water at the base of St. Anthony's firm headland. We were well out of that, with good Cornish land our bulwark.

Ahead of us lay Falmouth town, dim and misty under the stormy sky. A 'sailor-town,' indeed, for the grey stone houses, clustered in irregular masses, extended far along the water front—on the beach, almost, as though the townsfolk held only to business with tide and tide-load, and had set their houses at high-water mark for greater convenience. In spite of the high wind and rough sea, a fleet of shore boats were setting out toward the anchorage. Needs a master wind, in truth, to keep the Falmouth quay-punts at their moorings

when homeward-bound ships lie anchored in the Roads, whose lean, ragged sailormen have money to spend!

Under close-reefed rags of straining canvas, they came at us, lurching heavily in the broken seaway, and casting the spray mast-high from their threshing bows. To most of them our barque was the sailing mark. Shooting up in the wind's eye with a great rattle of blocks and *slatt* of wet canvas, they laid us aboard. There followed a scene of spirited action. A confusion of wildly swaying masts and jarring broadsides—shouts and curses, protest and insult; fending, pushing, sails and rigging entangled in our out-gear. Struggling to a foothold, where any offered on our rusty topsides, the boatmen clambered aboard, and the Captain was quickly surrounded by a clamorous crowd, extending cards and testimonials, and loudly praying for the high honour of 'sarving' the homeward bound.

"Capten! I sarved 'ee when 'ee wos mate o' th' *Orion*! Do 'ee mind Pengelly—Jan Pengelly, Capten!"—"Boots, Capten? Damme, if them a'nt boots o' my makin', 'ee 're a-wearin' nah!"—" . . . can dew 'ee cheaper 'n any man on th' Strand, Capten!"—"Trevethick's th' man, Capten! Fort—(th' 'ell 'ee shovin' at?)—Forty year in Falmouth, Capten!"

Old Jock was not to be hurried in his bestowal of custom. From one he took a proffered cigar; from another a box of matches. Lighting up, he seated himself on the skylight settee.

"Aye, aye! Man, but ye're the grand talkers," he said.

The crowd renewed their clamour, making bids and offers one against the other.

"Come down t' th' cabin, one of ye," said the Old Man, leading the way. A purposeful West-countryman, brushing the crowd aside, followed close at heel. The others stood around, discussing the prospect of business.

"Scotch barque, a'n't she?" said one. "Not much to be made o' them Scotch Captens! Eh, Pengelly, 'ee knows? Wot about th' Capten o' th' *Newtonend*, wot 'ee sarved last autumn?"

The man addressed looked angrily away, the others laughed: a sore point!

"Paid 'ee wi' tawps'l sheets, didn't 'e?" said another. "A fair wind, an' him bound West! *Tchutt!* 'ee must 'a bin sleepin' sound when th' wind come away, Pengelly, m' son!"

Pengelly swore softly.

"Don't 'ee mind un, Jan, m' boy?" added a third. "Mebbe th' Capten 'll send 'ee 'Spanish notes' when 'e arrives out—Santa Rosalia, worn't it?"

A bustle at the companionway put a stop to the chaff, the purposeful man having come on deck, glum of countenance.

"You'm struck a right 'hard case,' boys," he said. "Twenty per cent ain't in it—an' I'm off. So long!"

One by one the tradesmen had their interview, and returned to deck to talk together, with a half laugh, of Scotch 'Jews' and hard bargains. Hard bargains being better than no business, the contracts were taken up, the crowd dispersed, and we were soon in a position to order our longshore togs and table luxuries—at prices that suggested that someone was warming his boots at our fire.

With Jan Pengelly we bargained for foodstuffs. It was something of a task to get comfortably aboard his 'bumboat,' heaving and tossing as she was in the short sea. In the little cabin, securely battened and tarpaulined against the drenching sprays that swept over the boat, he kept his stock—a stock of everything that a homeward-bounder could possibly require; but his silk scarves and velvet slippers, silver-mounted pipes and sweet tobacco hats, held no attraction for us: it was food we sought—something to satisfy the hunger of five months' voyaging on scant rations—and at that we kept Jan busy, handing out and taking a careful tally of our purchases.

On deck there was little work for us to do. Little could be done, for, as the day wore on to a stormy setting, wind and sea increased, forcing even the hardy boatmen to cast off and run to a sheltered creek at St. Mawes. The icy, biting spray, scattered at every plunge of our ground-fast barque, left no corner of the deck unsearched, and, after a half-hearted attempt to keep us going, the Mate was forced to order 'stand by.' In half-deck and fo'cas'le we gathered round the red-hot bogies, and talked happily of the voyage's end, of the pay-table, of resolves to stop there when we had come ashore.

Then came the night, at anchor-watch. Tramping for a brief hour, two together, sounding, to mark that she did not drive a-lee; listening to the crash of seas, the harping of the rigging, to the *thrap, thrap* of wind-jarred halliards; struggling to the rigging at times, to put alight an ill-burning riding lamp; watching the town lights glimmer awhile, then vanish as quick succeeding squalls of snow enwrapped the Bay. A brief spell of duty, not ill-passed, that made the warmth of the half-deck and the red glow of the bogie fire more grateful to return to.

As day broke the gale was at its height. Out of a bleak and threatening west the wind blew ominously true—a whole gale, accompanied by

a heavy fall of snow. There could be no boat communication with the shore in such a wind, but, as soon as the light allowed, we engaged the Signal Station with a string of flags, and learnt that our orders had not yet come to hand, that they would be communicated by signal, if received during the day.

After we had re-stowed sails and secured such gear and tackle as had blown adrift in the night, 'stand by' was again the order, reluctantly given, and all hands took advantage of the rare circumstance of spare time and a free pump to set our clothes cleanly and in order.

Near noon the Mate spied fluttering wisps of colour rising on the signal yard ashore. Steadying himself in a sheltered corner, he read the hoist: W.Q.H.L.—our number.

"Aft here, you boys, an' hand flags," he shouted. Never was order more willingly obeyed; we wanted to know.

The news went round that our orders had come. With bared arms, dripping of soapsuds, the hands came aft, uncalled, and the Mate was too busy with telescope and signal-book to notice (and rebuke) the general muster of expectant mariners.

As our pennant was run up, the hoist ashore was hauled down, to be replaced by a new. The

Mate read out the flags, singly and distinct, and turned to the pages of the signal-book.

“ ‘You — are — ordered — to— proceed—to’— Answering pennant up, lively now; damme, I can’t rest you boys a minute, but ye run to seed an’ sodgerin’!”

A moment of suspense; to proceed to—where? The Old Man was on deck now, with code-book in hand, open at the ‘geographicals.’ “ ‘B—D—S—T,’ ” sang out the Mate. “B.D.S.T.,” repeated the Old Man, wetting a thumb and turning the pages rapidly. “B.D.S.T., B.D.S—Sligo! Sligo, where’s that, anyway?”

“North of Ireland, sir,” said M’Kellar. “Somewhere east of Broadhaven. I wass in there once, mysel’.”

“Of course, of course! Sligo, eh? Well, well! I never heard of a square-rigger discharging there—must see about th’ charts. Ask them to repeat, Mister, and make sure.”

Our query brought the same flags to the yard. B.D.S.T.—Sligo, without a doubt—followed by a message, “Letters will be sent off as soon as weather moderates.”

There was a general sense of disappointment when our destination was known; Ireland had never even been suggested as a possible finish to our voyage. Another injustice!

As the afternoon wore on, the wind lessened and hauled into the north. The bleak storm-clouds softened in outline, and broke apart to show us promise of better weather in glimpses of clear blue behind. Quickly, as it had got up, the harbour sea fell away. The white curling crests no longer uprose, to be caught up and scattered afar in blinding spindrift. Wind, their fickle master, had proved them false, and now sought, in blowing from a new airt, to quell the tumult he had bidden rise.

With a prospect of letters—of word from home—we kept an eager look-out for shore-craft putting out, and when our messenger arrived after a long beat, the boat warp was curled into his hand and the side ladder rattled to his feet before he had time to hail the deck. With him came a coasting pilot seeking employ, a voluble Welshman, who did not leave us a minute in ignorance of the fact that “he knew th’ coast, indeed, ass well ass he knew Car—narvon!”

Then to our letters. How we read and re-read, and turned them back and forward, scanning even the post-mark for further news!

Early astir, we had the lee anchor at the bows before dawn broke. A bright, clear frosty morning, a cloudless sky of deepest blue, the land

around wrapped in a mantle of snow—a scene of tranquillity in sea and sky, in marked contrast to the bitter weather of the day before. At the anchorage all was haste and stirring action. A gentle breeze from the north was blowing—a ‘soldier’s’ wind that set fair to east and west, and the wind-bound ships were hurrying to get their anchors and be off, to make the most of it. A swift pilot cutter, sailing tack and tack through the anchorage, was serving pilots on the outward bound, and as each was boarded in turn, the merry *clank-clank* of windlass pawls broke out, and the chorus of an anchor chantey woke the echoes of the Bay. Quay punts passed to and fro from ship to shore, lurching, deep-laden with stores, or sailing light to reap the harvest that the west wind had blown them. Among them came Jan Pengelly (anxious that payment ‘by tops’l sheets’ did not again occur with him), and the Welsh coasting pilot who was to sail with us.

The weather anchor was strong bedded and loth to come home, and it was as the last of the fleet that we hoisted our number and ran out between Pendennis and the Head. The Old Man was in high good humour that he had no towing bills to settle, and walked the poop, rubbing his hands and whistling a doleful encouragement to the chill north wind.

Safely past the dread Manacles, the Falmouth pilot left us. We crowded sail on her, steering free, and dark found us in open channel, leaning to a steady breeze, and the Lizard Lights dipping in the wake astern.

XXVI

"T' WIND'ARD!"

FOR over a week of strong westerly gales we had kept the open sea, steering to the north as best the wind allowed. A lull had come—a break in the furious succession, though still the sea ran high—and the Old Man, in part satisfied that he had made his northing, put the helm up and squared away for the land. In this he was largely prompted by the coasting pilot (sick of a long, unprofitable passage—on a 'lump-sum' basis), who confidently asked to be shown but one speck of Irish land, and, "I'll tell 'oo the road t' Dub-lin, Capt'in!"

Moderately clear at first, but thickening later, as we closed the land, it was not the weather for running in on a dangerous coast, ill-lighted and unmarked, but, had we waited for clear weather, we might have marked time to the westward until the roses came; the wind was fair, we were overlong on our voyage; sheet and brace and wind in squared sail thrummed a homeward song for us as we came in from the west.

At close of a day of keen sailing, the outposts

of the Irish coast, bleak, barren, inhospitable, lay under our lee—a few bold rocks, around and above wreathed in sea-mist, and the never-dying Atlantic swell breaking heavily at their bases.

"Iss, indeed, Capt'in! The Stags! The Stags of Broad-haven, I tell 'oo," said the pilot, scanning through his glasses with an easy assurance. "Indeed to goodness, it iss the best landfall I haf ever seen, Capt'in!"

Though pleased with his navigation, the Old Man kept his head. "Aye, aye," he said. "The Stags, eh? Well, we'll haul up t' th' wind anyway—t' make sure!" He gave the order, and went below to his charts.

Rolling heavily, broad to the sea and swell, we lay awhile. There was no sign of the weather clearing, no lift in the grey mist that hung dense over the rugged coast-line. On deck again, the Old Man stared long and earnestly at the rocky islets, seeking a further guidemark. In the waning daylight they were fast losing shape and colour. Only the breaking sea, white and sightly, marked them bold in the grey mist-laden breath of the Atlantic. "—— 'present themselves, consisting of four high rocky islets of from two thirty-three to three ought-six feet in height, an' steep-to,'" he said, reading from a book of sailing directions. "Damme! I can only see three." To the pilot,

"D'ye know the Stags well, Mister? Are ye sure o' ye're ground?"

"*Wel, wel!* Indeed, Capt'in" (Mr. Williams laughed). "I know the Stags, yess! Ass well ass I know Car-narvon! The Stags of Broadhaven, I tell 'oo. When I wass master of the *Ann Pritchard*, of Beaumaris, it wass always to the West of Ireland we would be goin'. Summer and winter, three years, I tell 'oo, before I came to pilotin'—an' there iss not many places between the Hull and Missen Head that I haf not seen in daylight an' dark. It iss the Stags, indeed! East, south-east now, Capt'in, an' a fine run to Sligo Bar!"

Still unassured, the Old Man turned his glasses on the rocky group. "One—two—three—perhaps that was the fourth just open to the south—'ard"—they certainly tallied with the description in the book—"high, steep-to." A cast of the lead brought no decision. Forty-seven! He might be ten miles north and south by that and former soundings. It was rapidly growing dark, the wind freshening. If he did not set course by the rocks—Stags they seemed to be—he would lose all benefit of landfall—would spend another week or more to the westward, waiting for a rare slant on this coast of mist and foul weather! Already eighteen days from Falmouth! The chance of running in

was tempting! Hesitating, uncertain, he took a step or two up and down the poop, halting at turns to stare anxiously at the rocks, in the wind’s eye, at the great Atlantic combers welling up and lifting the barque to leeward at every rise. On the skylight sat Mr. Williams, smiling and clucking in his beard that “he did not know the Stags, indeed!”

“We haul off, Pilot,” said stout Old Jock, coming at a decision. “If it had been daylight . . . perhaps . . . but I’m for takin’ no risks. They may be th’ Stags, belike they are, but I’m no’ goin’ oan in weather like this! We’ll stand out t’ th’ norrard—‘mainyards forrard, Mister’—till daylight onyway!”

Sulkily we hauled the yards forward and trimmed sail, leaving the rocks to fade under curtain of advancing night, our high hopes of making port dismissed. The ‘navigators’ among us were loud of their growling, as the ship lurched and wallowed in the trough of the sea, the decks waist-high with a wash of icy water—a change from the steadiness and comfort of a running ship.

Night fell black dark. The moon not risen to set a boundary to sea and sky; no play of high light on the waste of heaving water; naught but the long inky ridges, rolling out of the west, that, lifting giddily to crest, sent us reeling into the

windless trough. On the poop the Old Man and Pilot tramped fore and aft, talking together of landfalls and coasting affairs. As they came and went, snatches of their talk were borne to us, the watch on deck—sheltering from the weather at the break. The Old Man's "Aye, ayes," and "Goad, man"s, and the voluble Welshman's "iss, indeed, Capt'in," and "I tell 'oo"s. The Pilot was laying off a former course of action. ". . . Mister Williams, he said, I can see that 'oo knows th' coast, he said, an' . . . I 'oodn't go in myself, he said; but if 'oo are sure——"

"*Brea—kers a-head!*"—a stunning period to his tale, came in a long shout, a scream almost, from the look-out!

Both sprang to the lee rigging, handing their eyes to shield the wind and spray. Faint as yet against the sombre monotone of sea and sky, a long line of breaking water leapt to their gaze, then vanished, as the staggering barque drove to the trough; again—again; there could be no doubt. Breakers! On a lee shore!!

"*Mawdredd an'!* O Christ! The Stags, Capt'in. . . . My God! My God!" Wholly unmanned, muttering in Welsh and English, Mr. Williams ran to the compass to take bearings.

Old Jock came out of the rigging. Then, in a steady voice, more ominous than a string of oaths,

"Luff! Down helm, m' lad, an' keep her close!" And to the pilot, "Well? What d'ye mak' of it, Mister?"

"Stags, Capt'in! *Diwedd i!* That I should be mistake. . . . The others . . . God knows! . . . If it iss th' Stags, Capt'in . . . the passage t' th' suth'ard. . . . I know it . . . we can run . . . if it iss th' Stags, Capt'in!"

"An' if it's no' th' Stags! M' Goad! Hoo many Stags d'ye know, Mister? No! No! We'll keep th' sea, if she can weather thae rocks . . . an' if she canna!" A mute gesture—then, passionately, "T' hell wi' you an' yer b——y Stags: I back ma ship against a worthless pilot! All hands, there, Mister—mains'l an' to'galn's'l oan her! Up, ye hounds; up, if ye look fur dry berryin'!"

All hands! No need for a call! "Breakers ahead"—the words that sent us racing to the yards, to out knife and whip at the gaskets that held our saving power in leash. Quickly done, the great mainsail blew out, thrashing furiously till steadied by tack and sheet. Then topgal'n' sail, the spars buckling to overstrain; staysail, spanker—never was canvas crowded on a ship at such a pace; a mighty fear at our hearts that only frenzied action could allay.

Shuddering, she lay down to it, the lee rail

entirely awash, the decks canted at a fearsome angle; then righted—a swift, vicious lurch, and her head sweeping wildly to windward till checked by the heaving helmsman. The wind that we had thought moderate when running before it now held at half a gale. To that she might have stood weatherly, but the great western swell—spawn of uncounted gales—was matched against her, rolling up to check the windward snatches and sending her reeling to leeward in a smother of foam and broken water.

A gallant fight! At the weather gangway stood Old Jock, legs apart and sturdy, talking to his ship.

“Stand, good spars,” he would say, casting longing eyes aloft. Or, patting the taffrail with his great sailor hands, “Up tae it, ye bitch! Up!! Up!!!” as, raising her head, streaming in cascade from a sail-pressed plunge, she turned to meet the next great wall of water that set against her. “Sh’ll stand it, Mister,” to the Mate at his side. “Sh’ll stand it, an’ the head gear holds. If she starts that!”—he turned his palms out—“If she starts th’ head gear, Mister!”

“They’ll hold, Sir! . . . good gear,” answered the Mate, hugging himself at thought of the new lanyards, the stout Europe gammon lashings, he had rove off when the boom was rigged. Now was

the time when Sanny Armstrong's spars would be put to the test. The relic of the ill-fated *Glenisla*, now a shapely to'gallant mast, was bending like a whip! "Good iron," he shouted as the backstays twanged a high note of utmost stress.

Struggling across the heaving deck, the Pilot joined the group. Brokenly, shouting down the wind, "Sh'll never do it, Capt'in, I tell 'oo! . . . An' th' tide. . . . Try th' south passage. . . . Stags, sure! . . . See them fair now! . . . Th' south passage, Capt'in. . . . It is some years, indeed, but . . . I know. *Diwedd an'!* She'll never weather it, Capt'in!"

"Aye . . . and weather it . . . an' the gear holds! Goad, man! Are ye sailor enough t' know what'll happen if Ah start a brace, wi' this press o' sail oan her? T' wind'ard . . . she goes. Ne'er failed me yet"—a mute caress of the stout taffrail, a slap of his great hand. "Into it, ye bitch! T' wind'ard! T' wind'ard!"

Staggering, taking the shock and onset of the relentless seas, but ever turning the haughty face of her anew to seek the wind, she struggled on, nearing the cruel rocks and their curtain of hurtling breakers. Timely, the moon rose, herself invisible, but shedding a diffused light in the east, showing the high summits of the rocks,

upreared above the blinding spindrift. A low moaning boom broke on our strained ears, turning to the hoarse roar of tortured waters as we drew on.

"How does 't bear noo, M'Kellar? Is she makin' oan't?" shouted the Old Man.

The Second Mate, at the binnacle, sighted across the wildly swinging compass card. "No' sure, Sir. . . . Th' caird swingin' . . . think there's hauf a p'int. . . . Hauf a p'int, onyway!"

"Half a point!" A great comber upreared and struck a deep resounding blow—"That for year half a point"—as her head swung wildly off—off, till the stout spanker, the windward driver, straining at the stern sheets, drove her anew to a seaward course.

Nearer, but a mile off, the rocks plain in a shaft of breaking moonlight.

"How now, M'Kellar?"

"Nae change, Sir! . . . 'bout east, nor'-east . . . deefecult . . . th' caird swingin' . . ."

The Old Man left his post and struggled to the binnacle. "East, nor'-east . . . east 'o' that, mebbe," he muttered. Then, to 'Dutchy,' at the weather helm, "Full, m' lad! Keep 'er full an' nae mair! Goad, man! Steer as ye never steered . . . th' wind's yer mairk. . . . Goad! D'na shake her!"

Grasping the binnacle to steady himself against the wild lurches of the staggering hull, the Old Man stared steadily aloft, unheeding the roar and crash of the breakers, now loud over all—eyes only for the straining canvas and standing spars above him.

“She’s drawin’ ahead, Sir,” shouted M’Kellar, tense, excited. “East, b’ nor’ . . . an’ fast!”

The Old Man raised a warning hand to the steersman. “Nae higher! Nae higher! Goad, man! Danna let ’r gripe!”

Dread suspense! Would she clear? A narrow lane of open water lay clear of the bow—broadening as we sped on.

“Nae higher! Nae higher! Aff! Aff! Up hellum, up!” His voice a scream, the Old Man turned to bear a frantic heave on the spokes.

Obedient to the helm and the Mate’s ready hand at the driver sheets, she flew off, free of the wind and sea—tearing past the towering rocks, a cable’s length to leeward. Shock upon shock, the great Atlantic sea broke and shattered and fell back from the scarred granite face of the outmost Stag; a seething maelstrom of tortured waters, roaring, crashing, shrilling into the deep, jagged fissures—a shriek of Furies bereft. And, high above the tumult of the waters and the loud,

glad cries of us, the hoarse, choking voice of the man who had backed his ship.

“Done it, ye bitch!”—a now trembling hand at his old grey head. “Done it! Weathered—by Goad!”

XXVII

LIKE A MAN!

SPRING in the air of it, a bright, keen day, and the mist only strong enough to soften the bold, rugged outline of Knocknarea, our sailing mark, towering high and solitary above Sligo Harbour. The strong west wind that we had fought and bested at the Stags turned friendly, had blown us fair to our voyage's end, and now, under easy canvas, we tacked on shore and off, waiting for tide to bear up and float our twenty feet in safety across the Bar.

At Raghly, our signal for a local pilot was loyally responded to. A ship of tonnage was clearly a rare sight in these parts, for the entire male population came off to see us safely in—to make a day of it! Old pilots and young, fishermen and gossoons, they swept out from creek and headland in their swift Mayo skiffs, and though only one was Trinity licensed for our draft of water, the rest remained, to bear willing hands at the braces on the chance of a job at the cargo being given.

'Ould Andy' was the official pilot—a hardy old farmer-fisherman, weazened by years and the

weather. He had donned his best in honour of the occasion—a coarse suit of fearnought serges, quaintly cut, and an ancient top hat, set at a rakish angle. Hasty rising showed in razor cuts on his hard blue jowl, and his untied shoes made clatter as he mounted the poop, waving a yellow time-stained license. An odd figure for a master-pilot; but he made a good impression on Old Jock when he said, simply, “. . . but bedad, now, Cyaptin! Sure, Oim no hand at thim big yards ov yours, but Oi kin show ye where th’ daape watter is!”

The ship steered to his liking, and all in trim he walked the poop, showing a great pride of his importance as a navigator of twenty feet. Suddenly—at no apparent call—he stepped to the side where his boat was towing.

“What-t,” he yelled. “Ach, houl’t yer whisht! What-t are yez shoutin’ about? What-t? Ast the Cyaptin f’r a bit av ’baccy f’r th’ byes in th’ boat! Indade, an’ Oi will natt ast th’ dacent gintilman f’r a bit av ’baccy f’r th’ byes in th’ boat! What-t? Ach, houl’t yer whisht, now!”

Joining the Captain he resumed the thread of his description of Sligo Port, apparently unheeding the Old Man’s side order to the steward that sent a package of hard tobacco over the rail.

“. . . an’ ye’ll lie at Rosses Point, Cyaptin,

till ye loighten up t' fourteen faate. Thin, thr'll be watther f'r yes at th' Quay, but . . ." (Another tangent to the lee rail.) . . . "Ach! What-t's th' matther wit' ye now. Be m' sowl, it's heart-breakin' ye are, wit' yer shoutin' an' that-t! What-t? Salt baafe an' a few bisskits! No! Oi will natt!! Ast 'im yersilf f'r a bit av salt baafe an' a few bisskits, bad scran t' ye, yes ongrateful thaaves!"

We are homeward bound; the beef and biscuits go down. After them, "a tarn sail—jest a rag, d'ye moind, t' make a jib f'r th' ould boat"; then, "a pat av paint an' a brush"—it becomes quite exciting with Ould Andy abusing his boat's crew at every prompted request. We are beginning to wager on the nature of the next, when sent to the stations for anchoring. Ould Andy, with an indignant gesture and shake of his fists, turns away to attend to his more legitimate business, and, at his direction, we anchor to seaward of the Bar.

The wind that has served us so well has died away in faint airs, leaving a long glassy swell to score the placid surface of the Bay and set a pearly fringe on the distant shore. The tide moves steadily in flood, broadening in ruffling eddies at the shoals of the Bar. On a near beacon a tide gauge shows the water, and when sail is furled and

the yards in harbour trim we have naught to do but reckon our wages, and watch the rising water lapping, inch by inch, on the figured board. From seaward there is little to be seen of the countryside. The land about is low to the coast, but far inland blue, mist-capped ranges stand bold and rugged against the clear northern sky. Beyond the Bar the harbour lies bare of shipping—only a few fishing skiffs putting out under long sweeps, and the channel buoys bobbing and heaving on the long swell. A deserted port we are come to after our long voyage from the West!

“That’ll be th’ *Maid o’ th’ Moy*, Cyaptin,” said Ould Andy, squinting through the glasses at smoke-wrack on the far horizon. “Hot-fut from Ballina, t’ tow ye in. An’ Rory Kilgallen may save his cowl, bedad, f’r we’ll naade two fut av watther yet before we get acrost. Bedad”—in high glee—“he’ll nat-t be after knowin’ that it’s twinty faate, no liss, that Ould Andy is bringin’ in this day!”

With a haste that marks her skipper’s anxiety to get a share of the good things going, the *Maid*, a trim little paddle tug, draws nigh, and soon a high bargaining begins between Old Jock and the tugman, with an eager audience to chorus, “D’ye hear that-t, now!” at each fiery period. Rory has the whip hand—and knows it. No compe-

tion, and the tide making inch by inch on the beacon gauge!

For a time Old Jock holds out manfully. "Goad, no! I'll kedge th' hooker up t' Sligo Quay before I give ye that!" But high water at hand and no sign of wind, he takes the tug on at a stiff figure, and we man the windlass, tramping the well-worn round together for the last time.

Leave her is the set chantey for finish of a voyage, and we roar a lusty chorus to Granger, the chanteyman.

"O! Leave 'r John-ny, leave 'r like a man,

(An' leave 'r, John-ny, leave 'r!)

Oh! Leave 'r, John-ny, leave 'r when ye can,

(An' it's time—for us—t' leave 'r!)"

A hard heave, and the tug lying short. A Merseyman would have the weight off the cable by this.

"O! Soon we'll 'ear 'th Ol' Man say,

(Leave 'r, John-ny, leave 'r!)

Ye kin go ashore an' take yer pay,

(An' it's time—for us—t' leave 'r!)"

"Heave, byes," the gossoons bearing stoutly on the bars with us. "Heave, now! He's got no frin's!"

"O! Th' times was 'ard, an' th' wages low,

(Leave 'r, John-ny, leave 'r!)

Th' w'yage was long, an' th' gales did blow,

(An' it's time—for us—t' leave 'r!)"

Check—and rally; check—a mad rush round—the anchor dripping at the bows, and we move on across the eddies of the Bar in wake of the panting tug.

A short tow, for all the bargaining, and at Rosses Point we bring up to moorings—the voyage at an end.

“That’ll do, you men,” said the Mate, when the last warp was turned. “Pay off at th’ Custom House at twelve to-morrow!”

“That’ll do!” Few words and simple; but the meaning! Free at last! No man’s servant! With a hurricane whoop the crew rush to quarters to sling their bags for the road.

Then the trafficking with the shore, the boatmen reaping a harvest. “A bob th’ trip, yer ’anner, on a day like this.” The doors of the village inn swinging constantly, and the white-aproned landlord (mopping a heated brow at royal orders), sending messengers to ransack the village cupboards for a reserve of glasses. And when at last the boats are ready for the long pull up to Sligo town, and the impatient boatmen shouting, “Coom on now, byes! Before th’ toide tarns; byes, now!” The free men embark, and we, the afterguard (who draw no pay), are left to watch them set off, and wish that our day were quickly come.

For a time we hear their happy voices, and answer cheer for cheer, then the dark comes, and the last is a steady *clack* of rowlocks, and the men singing "*Leave 'r, John-ny . . . like a man!*"

Two days later, on deck of the Glasgow boat, I gazed on my old ship for the last time. At the narrow bend we steamed slow, to steer cautiously past her. The harbour watch were there to give me a parting cheer, and Old Jock, from the poop, waved a cheery response to my salute. Past her, we turned water again, and sped on to sea.

It was a day of mist and low clouds, and a weakly sun breaking through in long slanting shafts of light. Over the Point a beam was fleeting, playing on the house-tops, shimmering in window glasses, lighting on the water, on the tracery of spar and rigging, and showing golden on the red-rusty hull of the old barque—my home for so long in fair weather and foul.

A turn of the steering shut her from my sight, and I turned to go below.

"Fine ships! Fine ships—t' look aat!"

The Mate of the steamer, relieved from duty, had stopped at my side, sociable. He would be a Skye-man by the talk of him. It was good to hear the old speech again.

"Aye! she's a fine ship."

"Haf you been th' voyage in her? Been long away?"

"Oh yes! Sixteen months this trip!"

"Saxteen munss! Ma grasshius! Y'll haf a fine pey oot o' her?"

"Not a cent! Owing, indeed; but my time'll be out in a week, an I'll get my indentures."

"Oh, yiss! Oh, yiss! A bressbounder, eh!" Then he gave a half-laugh, and muttered the old formula about "the man who would go to sea for pleasure, going to hell for a pastime!"

"Whatna voyage did ye haf, now?" he asked, after filling a pipe with good 'golden bar,' that made me empty the bowl of mine, noisily.

"Oh, pretty bad. Gales an' gales. Hellish weather off the Horn, an' short-handed, an' the house full o' lashin' water—not a dry spot, fore an aft. 'Gad! we had it sweet down there. Freezin', too, an' th' sails hard as old Harry. Ah! a fine voyage, wi' rotten grub an' short commons at that!"

"Man, man! D'ye tell me that, now! Ma grasshius! Ah wouldna go in them if ye wass t' gif me twenty pounds a munss!"

No; I didn't suppose he would, looking at the clean, well-fed cut of him, and thinking of the lean, hungry devils who had sailed with me.

"Naw! Ah wouldna go in them if ye wass t'

gif me thirrtty pounss a munss! Coaffins, Ah caall them! Aye, coaffins, that iss what they are!”

Coffin! I thought of a ship staggering hard-pressed to windward of a ledge of cruel rocks, the breakers shrieking for a prey, and the old grey-haired Master of her slapping the rail and shouting, “Up t’it, m’ beauty! T’ windward, ye bitch!”

“Aye, coaffins,” he repeated. “That iss what they are!”

I had no answer—he was a steamboat man, and would not have understood.

EPILOGUE

"1910"

INTO a little-used dock space remote from harbour traffic she is put aside—out of date and duty, surging at her rusted moorings when the dock gates are swung apart and laden steamships pass out on the road she may no longer travel. The days pass—the weeks—the months; the tide ebbs, and comes again; fair winds carry but trailing smoke-wrack to the rim of a far horizon; head winds blow the sea mist in on her—but she lies unheeding. Idle, unkempt, neglected; and the haughty figurehead of her is turned from the open sea.

Black with the grime of belching factories, the great yards, that could yet spread broad sails to the breeze, swing idly on untended braces, trusses creaking a note of protest, sheet and lift chains clanking dismally against the mast. Stout purchase blocks that once *chirped* in chorus to a seaman's chantey stand stiffened with disuse; idle rags of fluttering sailcloth mar the tracery of spar and cordage; in every listless rope, every dis-

ordered ratline, she flies a signal of distress—a pennant of neglect.

Her decks, encumbered with harbour gear and tackle, are given over to the rude hands of the longshoreman; a lumber yard for harbour refuse, a dumping ground for the ashes of the bustling dock tugs. On the hatch covers of her empty holds planks and stages are thrown aside, left as when the last of the cargo was dragged from her; hoist ropes, frayed and chafed to feather edges, swing from the yardarms; broken cargo slings lie rotting in a mess of grain refuse. The work is done. There is not a labourer's pay in her; the stevedores are gone ashore.

Though yet staunch and seaworthy, she stands condemned by modern conditions: conditions that call for a haste she could never show, for a burthen that she could never carry. But a short time, and her owners (grown weary of waiting a chance charter at even the shadow of a freight) may turn their thumbs down, and the old barque pass to her doom. In happy case, she may yet remain afloat—a sheer hulk, drowsing the tides away in some remote harbour, coal-hulking for her steam-pressed successor.

And of her crew, of the men who manned and steered her? Scattered afar on seven seas, learning a new way of seafaring; turning the grip that

had held to a life aloft to the heft of a coalman's shovel, the deft fingers that had fashioned a wondrous plan of stay and shroud to the touch of winch valve and lever. Only an old man remains, a warden, in keeping with the lowly state of his once trim barque. Too old (conservative, may be) to start sea life anew, he has come to ship-keeping—a not unpleasant way of life for an aged mariner, so that he can sit on the hatch on fine nights, with a neighbourly dock policeman or Customs watcher and talk of the sea as only he knows it. And when his gossip has risen to go the rounds, what links to the chain of memory may he not forge, casting his old eyes aloft to the gaunt spars and their burden of useless sail? Who knows what kindly ghosts of bygone ship-mates walk with him in the night watches, when the dock lies silent and the flickering harbour lights are shimmering, reflected in a broad expanse?

THE END

